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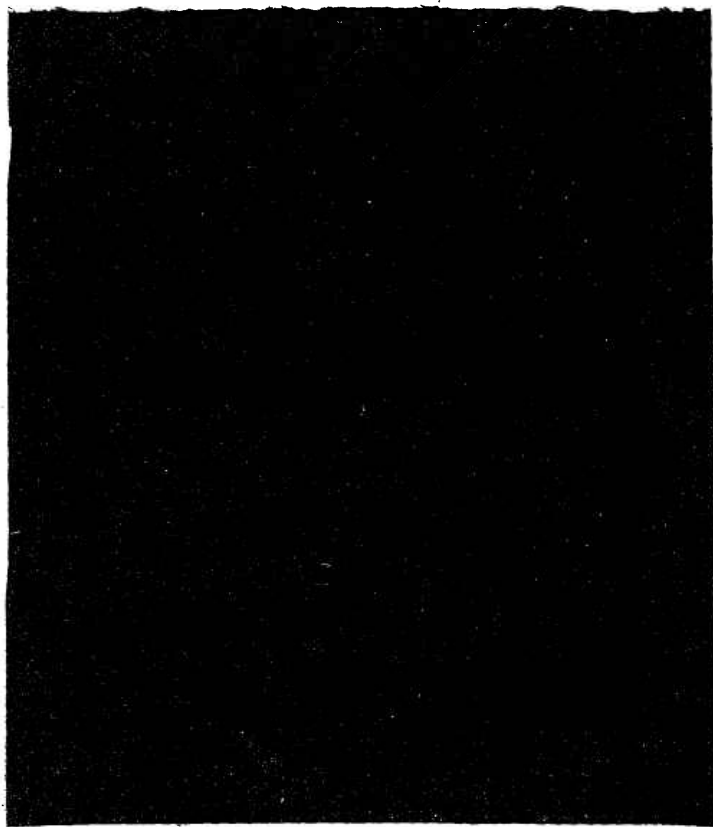
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DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN

MURRAY STREET CHURCH

ON SABBATH EVENINGS,

DURING THE MONTHS OF

MARCH, APRIL, AND MAY, 1830.

BY

DR. SPRING	DR. CARNAHAN
DR. COX	DR. WOODBRIDGE
DR. SKINNER	DR. RICE
DR. DE WITT	DR. WOODS
DR. MILLER	DR. WAYLAND
DR. SPRAGUE	DR. SNODGRASS

DR. GRIFFIN.

NEW YORK:

HENRY C. SLEIGHT, CLINTON-HALL.

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1830.

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SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighth day of November, Anno Domini 1830, in the fifty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, William D. Snodgrass, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit :

" Discourses delivered in Murray street Church, on Sabbath evenings, during the months of March, April, and May, 1830. By Dr. Spring, Dr. Cox, Dr. Skinner, Dr. De Witt, Dr. Miller, Dr. Sprague, Dr. Carnahan, Dr. Woodbridge, Dr. Rice, Dr. Woods, Dr. Wayland, Dr. Snodgrass, Dr. Griffin."

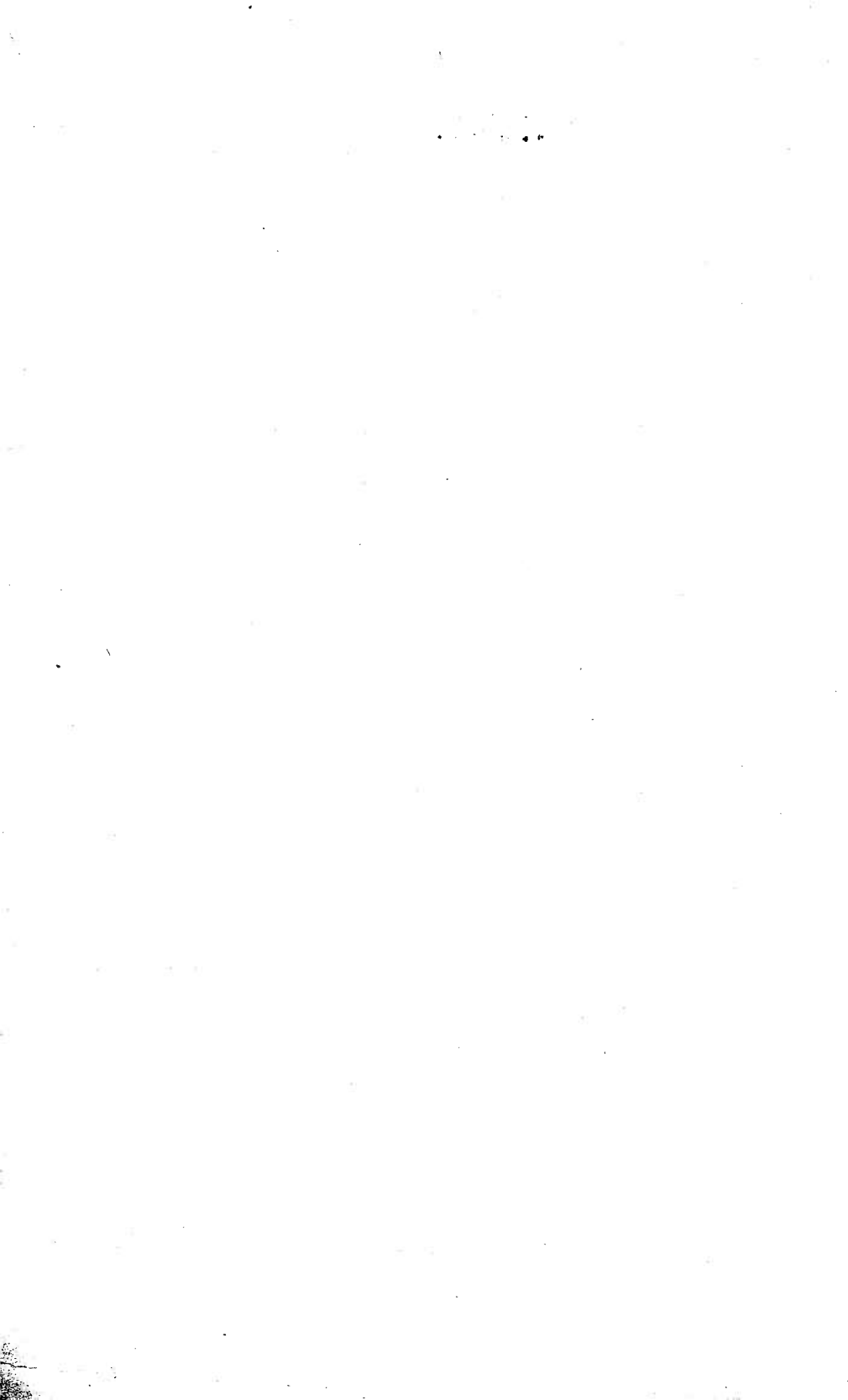
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FREDERICK I. BETTS,

Clerk of the Southern District of New York.

14160.

THE DISCOURSES, contained in this volume, were prepared, at the request of the pastor of the church, in which they were delivered, together with other clergymen, residing in the City of New York. It was thought, by them, that a course of Sabbath-evening exercises, on such subjects as are here discussed, and by ministers residing in different parts of the country, could not fail to be interesting and edifying. The result has, in a good degree, justified their expectations. And, in compliance with a wish, expressed by many, who were present during the delivery, the whole series is now presented to the public, through the medium of the press.



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DISCOURSE I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

PHILIPPIANS I. 9.—“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment.”

It is natural, at the threshold of the enterprise to which these lectures are devoted, to endeavour to interest you in the worthiness of their object. To interest men in the truths of the Bible, is the great reason why a revelation was given. We know it is impossible for the mass of mankind to become adepts in theological science; and yet there are few but may, and ought to be familiar with the great doctrines of revelation. One would think it a reproach to good men, not to be familiar with the truths of the Bible. You would not expect a professed Stoic to be ignorant of the doctrines of Zeno; nor a Mohammedan to be unacquainted with

the Koran ; nor a Brahmin to be uninstructed in the Shaster. And why should a Christian be a stranger to the truths of Christianity ? Our design in this introduction to the following series of discourses is, therefore, to lay before you a few considerations, illustrative of the importance of Christian knowledge. To give some form and order to our remarks, we observe,

I. *The subjects which Christianity presents, are themselves the most important and sublime in the universe.*

Reaching from the eternity which the Immortal Creator inhabited before the foundation of the world, to the eternity we shall inhabit after this world shall have passed away, they are literally of infinite extent and compass. The light of revelation first leads our minds up to Him, who, though he dwells in light unapproachable, and fills the universe with his presence, is about our path and about our bed ; to Him, on whom all beings depend, from the arch-angel to the worm, to whom all are indebted for their powers and faculties, and from whom they derive their comforts, and who, while he is slow to anger and of great kindness, is terrible in majesty. Then it makes us acquainted with his vast and perfect purposes, comprehending all his works, and all the events of his providence in this world and other worlds, in time and through interminable ages. It then directs our thoughts to the great law which he has published, by which he establishes the moral order and

harmony of intelligent beings, both in respect to one another and to him, and by which he throws such everlasting responsibility on all worlds, and on every creature. Next to these elevating themes, it leads us to take a view of that world of wonders, the creature man—his intellectual and moral nature—his origin, his primeval rectitude, and his fatal apostacy—a mystery to himself, a mystery to angels, and yet, more than all the works of God, the means of drawing forth the manifold glory of his Maker. Afterwards, we listen to the glad tidings of great joy, announced in the wonderful method of redemption, by the incarnation and death, resurrection and intercession, mediatorial reign and triumph of God's co-equal son. Then, we dwell on the character and office of the Divine Spirit. We see the benighted soul of man, under his powerful influence, brought out of darkness into marvellous light; we see how this guilty, impoverished creature is furnished with every gift and grace; how he is enriched and adorned, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with saints in light. And then, when we have become familiar with providences and ordinances, with hopes and fears, with death and the grave, and with the resurrection both of the just and the unjust, we are introduced to eternity. Through the light that here descends upon us, we see the life and immortality that are brought to light in the gospel; we descry that vast continent that lies be-

yond the grave; we see the boundless universe that stretches itself immeasurably beyond. There, scenes and prospects rise, that alternately appal and enchant us—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven—the throne of judgement—the assembled universe—the final sentence—the everlasting retribution—the eternal heaven—the eternal hell!

And, in such a research, is there nothing worthy? As mere topics of thought and intellectual cultivation, all other themes, in comparison with these, may be left out of sight and remembrance. Every other department of human science vanishes and fades away before the majesty and splendour of divine truth. These are the things “into which the angels desire to look.” Of all others, topics like these are objects of inquiry for which the mind of man, formed in the image of its Maker, seems appropriately designated. The perceptions, the judgment, the memory, the imagination, the conscience, the very emotions of the soul, fall far below their high destination, when they can no longer be absorbed in themes like these. Nor are they dry and heartless speculations, which the Scriptures reveal, and which a conscientious mind may throw aside as of no practical moment. Nor are they mere ideal schemes, which may amuse the spirit of speculation and then be rejected with impunity. They are inwoven with all that is real in our enjoyments and sufferings; with all that is cheering in our hopes and terrible in our fears;

with all that is solemn and affecting in our accountability and immortality. Whatever is fearful and weighty in the rights of the Creator and the obligations of creatures, in the designs of the Sovereign and the destiny of his subjects, is here disclosed. There is no truth in the Scriptures which, in its proximate or remote relations, has not a legitimate bearing upon the character, the duty, the condition of all rational agents. The truth of God is as interesting to the poor as to the rich ; as interesting to the low as to the high ; as interesting to people as to ministers ; as interesting to this world, as to that glorious world whence it emanated. When all that is embodied in the magnificent systems of human learning shall have been forgotten ; when the sun shall have been turned into darkness ; when these orbs, the nature, phenomena, and laws of which philosophers have occupied centuries to explain, shall have mouldered to ashes ; when this earth, whose bowels and treasures have been explored with such penetrating diligence, shall have been burnt up ; the system of truth, which God has revealed, will exist immutably the same, and be exhibited in augmented splendour, and beheld with increasing interest and admiration.

II. JUST CONCEPTIONS OF THE TRUTH OF GOD ARE INDISPENSABLE TO THE POSSESSION OF TRUE HOLINESS.

No principle is more explicitly recognised in the Scriptures, or commends itself more to the approbation

of common sense and sound experience, than that the change of character from sin to holiness, from man's native and practical wickedness to the rectitude of the gospel, which is every where so much insisted on as the indispensable pre-requisite to the enjoyment of the divine favour and kingdom, is effected through the instrumentality of divine truth. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The divine conduct toward men every where recognises their rationality; and no where more sensibly, than in the method of his grace. In exciting proper affections toward the various objects to which they sustain a moral relation, he brings those objects to the view of the mind. Of the great multitude already sanctified by his grace, it may be said, they had slumbered in sin, unless they had been instructed, alarmed, convinced, and humbled through the instrumentality of truth. They had gone down to the grave and to the bar of God with a lie in their right hand, had not he, who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come, shewed them the things that are Christ's. And of the multitudes who are now ignorant of God and far from righteousness, must it be said, that they perish in their sins, until they become acquainted with God; and until he, by his convincing, quickening, and renovating power, make those views of truth lovely, which were once odious: and reconcile them to the

declarations, character, and demands of a God of truth and holiness.

What is holiness, but obedience to truth?—Truth desired, loved, obeyed,—this is the rectitude of moral beings. But how is the truth of God to be obeyed, unless it be *known*? Is it enough, that it be inscribed on the pages of revelation? Is it enough, that it be sealed up in a foreign and dead language? Is it enough, that it be announced from the pulpit? To every community might it be said, “Ye worship ye know not what;” on all their altars might it be inscribed, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,” so long as they remain ignorant of his truth. How can the mind be fitted for right volitions, except by a just apprehension of divine objects? Suppose a man in a Christian congregation, as ignorant of the truth of God as the Pagans; is there any charm in the privileges of the gospel that will break the bonds of his iniquity? What if he denies that God is the creator, and preserver, and governor of the universe; will he be sensible of his dependence or accountableness? What if he rejects the divinity and messiahship of Jesus Christ? will not the practical consequence be, that he seeks no interest in his redemption? What if he believes in the innate rectitude and practical integrity of the human heart; will he ever be voluntarily self-abased for his sinfulness? What if he strikes from his creed the atonement of the Son of God, the agency and office-work

of the Holy Spirit, the threatenings of everlasting punishment, and never detects nor eradicates these errors ; will he not find that his notions have a most sensible effect upon his practice—that he makes no effort to flee from the wrath to come—and that his intellectual ignorance and his intellectual deviations are ruinous ? Nothing is more obvious, than that doctrinal knowledge is essential to the existence of true religion in the soul. There can be no spiritual affections, where there are no intellectual perceptions of the truth. It is the unchanging law of our intellectual and moral existence, that the heart is affected through the medium of the understanding. There is no possible way by which the means of grace can be effectual to the conversion of men, except by an acquaintance with the truths they inculcate. The immediate effect of them is the communication of truth to the mind ; and without this impression, men might as well remain in the darkness of heathenism, as enjoy the privileges of the gospel. But,

III. If there is any justice in these remarks, they suggest another thought of equal importance. **WITHOUT THE SPIRIT OF THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE RAPID ADVANCES IN THE DIVINE LIFE.**

As holy affections must in the first instance be exercised toward some definite object, so must they continue to be exercised toward some object, well

defined, and clearly understood. Divine truth is so exactly accordant with the affections which the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, that they are kept alive only by means of this happy influence. It is the still, small voice of truth that vibrates on the hearts of good men. Truth—sometimes elicited by the dispensations of Providence, sometimes read and heard, but in whatever way communicated, truth still—is the great means which the Spirit of God employs to promote the sanctification of the church. But how can the truth become the means of augmented holiness, otherwise than by being understood? Our Lord prayed for his disciples, “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” Believers are exhorted to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” They are said to be “fed with knowledge and understanding.” Nor is it possible for them to have invigorated impressions of the beauty and loveliness of spiritual objects, without an invigorated view of those objects themselves.

The people of God, though initiated into the privileges of his kingdom, have much to acquire, before they grow in grace with observable rapidity. They have much to learn of God, that they may desire greater manifestations of his glory; much to learn of themselves and their imperfections, that they may be stimulated to greater attainments; much to learn of their obligations, that they may press after perfect

holiness ; much to learn of those mighty considerations to spiritual attainment, which direct, encourage, and stimulate them in their heavenly career—which rouse them from their slumbers, reproach them for their backslidings, and give increasing constancy and uniformity to their purposes and conduct. We are apt to lose sight of the ignorance of good men, and of the powerful tendency of their minds to ignorance of God above all other subjects. There is even *in their* bosoms the same remaining aversion to the doctrines of the gospel, that is found to the duties of the gospel ; and there is the same reason for watchfulness and caution in maintaining the truth of God, that is indispensable to the vigorous exercise of holy affection. They are equally self-denying. Hence we find, that when Christian men decline in the spirit and duties of piety, they are very apt to decline in the purity of their doctrinal views. And here lies the necessity of doctrinal instruction, and doctrinal research. Let the instructions of the gospel illuminate their understandings, and its heavy truths sink into their hearts, and the more secure will they be from dangerous apostacies, and the better enabled to maintain their heavenward course.

It is indeed lamentably true, that there are instances in which growth in knowledge does not secure growth in grace. And the reason is, truth does not make its appropriate *impression* upon their minds. There is some countervailing sin, which is superior in its in-

fluence to all the obligations of known truth. Good men always grow in grace in proportion to two things : the *extent* of their knowledge, and the *impression* which their knowledge produces. A man who is acquainted with a few truths *may* have more piety than the man who is acquainted with many ; because the few which he knows, make a deeper impression than the many which are known by those that are more extensively informed. The obligations to increased holiness, and the actual holiness of every gracious affection, are augmented by every accession of divine knowledge ; and other things being equal, those who make the most rapid advances in the one, must necessarily make the most rapid advances in the other.

There are not wanting those who question the expediency of devoting much of their time to the study of doctrines, lest it should impair the vigour, exhaust the tenderness, and freeze the fervour of their piety. ‘We do not need,’ say they, ‘so much dry discussion. We desire more of the milk of the gospel ; more to rouse and quicken us ; more to break up the fallow ground, and urge us on to practical godliness. We need useful information ; but we would not exercise ourselves in matters too high for us, to the neglect of our practical duty towards God and man.’ Is it so then, that “ignorance is the mother of devotion ?” Are there doctrines of the Bible which do not affect the practice of piety—increasing the love of it, confirming the habit of

it, and at every step elevating the mind toward God, and invigorating the desire to be like him? Is the theory of Christianity at war with the practice of Christianity? Do the doctrines of the Bible weaken the force of moral obligation? Of all studies, religion is the most practical. Doctrines that cannot be applied to practical purposes are no part of the Bible. Let the objector beware how he assumes, that there is any principle revealed in the divine oracles that has no practical tendency. Time will show how empty and superficial is that piety, that depreciates the great doctrines of the gospel, and that is not habitually inwoven with clear, intellectual perceptions of truth. It is not indeed necessary, that men should be familiar with all the truths of the Bible in order to be exemplary Christians. To some, God has imparted ten talents, and to others two, and to others one. Nor is the *mere* attainment of theological knowledge the great end of living. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." And yet, the humble Christian, who, like Enoch, walks with God, will tell you that the clearer his views of God, the more fervent is his love to his great and amiable character; the clearer his views of sin, the deeper and more self-abasing his repentance; the clearer his views of Christ, the stronger his faith; the clearer his views of duty, the higher is his delight in performing it; the clearer his views of the wants of his fellow-men, the more inexpressible are his desires to become the benefactor of

the human race, and the blessing of the world; the clearer his views of the glorious scenes beyond the grave, the more ardent are the longings of his soul to be absent from the body and present with the Lord: and the more, with open face, he beholds in these mirrors the glory of the Lord, is he changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is because the doctrines of religion so intimately affect the spirit and subject of religion, that there is such a charm thrown around every well directed and humble inquiry into the truth, as it is in Jesus. There are seasons when other objects are gradually excluded from the mind, and the things pertaining to godliness absorb the attention, and every grace is in active exercise. The veil between time and eternity is drawn aside. Future things appear present, and invisible things appear visible; and there is nothing to impede the most sensible exercise of holy affections. Thus it was with David: "While I was musing," says he, "the fire burned." Thus it was with the disciples on their way to Emmaus: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" And thus it is with every child of God, when he is advanced to high degrees of holiness. But,

IV. THE ATTAINMENT OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE IS THE SOURCE OF PURE AND ELEVATED ENJOYMENT. If the rational and immortal mind is

invested with the capacity for constant and perpetual progression ; if this thinking and active existence within us is capable eventually of knowing all that can be known, and of rising to higher and higher attainment, without measure and without end ; then is there in the mind of a devout and well informed christian, a foundation for pure and elevated joy. Of all the prospective emotions, the desire of knowledge is one of the most exalted. " Knowledge is pleasant to the soul." The pleasures of intellect rise as far above the pleasures of sense, as the mind is superior to the body. One of the distinguished advantages of a well cultivated and well disciplined mind, is the habit of abstracting it at pleasure from the objects of sense, and directing it to the varied combinations of truth. And the intellectual enjoyment resulting from this exercise bears a proportion to the excellence of its object. If pleasure attends the sublime operations of the intellect in other sciences ; if the men of research, and the men of letters, as they wander over the regions of intellect, felicitate themselves on their past attainments and their new advances ; how much purer, how much higher the felicity consequent on advances in the knowledge of God ! The happiness resulting from thought on other subjects, is little better than the grosser indulgences of the animal world, compared with the holy pleasures experienced from the various exhibitions of divine truth. God and his truth are the purest objects in

the universe ; they are the brightest, the most complete, and most durable ; and the joy that springs from them, is the purest, the most vivid, the fullest and the most indestructible joy. The truth of God is the natural aliment of all spiritual consolation. The best, the most comfortable seasons with which the people of God are favoured in the present world, are those in which they enjoy clear, exalting, and humbling views of truth. When, in their progressive acquisition of divine knowledge, the true nature of God is unfolded to their view, and all that is glorious in the divine power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and faithfulness, is disclosed to their gratified inspection, there is something in the view that captivates and transforms the mind. When they gaze at the light which is thrown in upon the world in which they dwell, and upon other creatures and other worlds, from the perfection of the divine plan, and the wisdom of the divine administrations—all shining more and more resplendent by all the darkness that has in vain attempted to obscure them—and when they see all the apparently diverging rays in the moral sphere converging in one luminous point, the cross of Christ ; every thing is gilded with light, and there is no darkness at all. All that is untoward in this world, and in other worlds ; all that is unmeasured in the invisible futurity—the holiness and the sin—the blessings and the curses—the glories and the terrors—in their governed subserviency to the

best of purposes, is contemplated with alternate wonder, submission, and joy. "Thy testimonies," says the happy Psalmist, "are *wonderful* ; therefore, doth my soul keep them. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. Thy word have I hid in my heart. I will delight myself in thy statutes."

In moral science as well as every other, good men begin their intellectual career from well nigh absolute ignorance. And yet, from the eager desire of knowledge, there are minds, even of an humble order, which make rapid acquisitions in the knowledge of God. The veriest infant in the school of Christ finds his understanding satisfied, his heart filled with love, his soul refreshed at the discovery of some new and important principle in the word of God. And as he passes on from one principle to another, and contemplates one truth after another in its divine nature, its wide connections, and eternal consequences ; as he discovers the harmony between them, the unexampled symmetry of the parts, and the beauty of the whole ; his soul is rapt in admiration, and he is allured by joyful communion with things unseen. He feels himself in a world of knowledge—new and illimitable. His are regions of intellectual pleasure, where the ardent eye of genius fades, and the proudest wing of genius tires. Already, his joys bear a resemblance to those where truth opens new and infinite sources of delight, and saints and angels rise higher in felicity, as they advance

in knowledge ; where "the pure in heart shall see God ;" where nothing shall eclipse the full vision of God and the Lamb ; and where we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. I remark,

V. The importance of christian knowledge is still further evinced by ITS INFLUENCE IN EXTENDING THE SPHERE OF CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

The highest wish of a good man is to be conformed to the image of God, and to become the instrument of good to the world. In our inquiries after the truth of God, we have little to do with what is merely curious. There is no truth in the Bible, which when clearly understood, does not have a favourable effect, not only upon our internal graces, but upon all benevolent exertion. "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." A well informed church, a well informed christian, is like a city set on a hill. There is a "throb of christian intelligence" in such a bosom, which is likely to give impulse and influence to every thing he devises. Such a man possesses a weight of character and a power of moral feeling, which exert the best influence. There is an "inspiration of enlightened affection" within him, that rarely fails to act directly upon the most important concerns of men. Such a man is always ready for action. There is nothing so quiescent in his nature, as to leave him in perpetual and perplexing vacillation between conflicting points of duty. If the spirit of his Master rests upon him in proportion to his intellectual

attainments, he will instruct the ignorant, strengthen the weak, comfort the afflicted, reclaim the wandering, and often become the instrument of converting some sinner from the error of his ways, or of arousing lukewarm and backsliding christians to renovated zeal and activity. If enfeebled churches need counsel, if benevolent associations solicit direction, if duties of high and weighty responsibility are to be performed; these are the men to whom the church and the world look for the blended influence of intelligence and integrity. There is a capriciousness and self-sufficiency of character which often attach themselves to piety of an unenlightened sort, and which however it may "brave danger and support toil," is disqualified for energetic and permanent usefulness. It is too apt to leave the beaten track and to be carried away by the mere novelties of benevolence, and the pretensions of sect. That exclusive and bigoted spirit, which has hindered the church of God so long from co-operating in the advancement of his kingdom, has no surer remedy than an enlarged view of the doctrines of the gospel. The spirit of sectarianism has ever been fortified by giving a disproportioned magnitude, not so much to the fundamental principles of the gospel, as to a few points of minor importance. Every truth in the Bible has its proper use, and its proper connection with the general system to which it belongs. The more comprehensive knowledge we have of the whole, the more have we of

a distinct knowledge of every one of its parts, and its due proportions. And who does not see, that enlarged views of the Redeemer's truth, grace, kingdom, and glory, would induce men more often to compromise their smaller differences and to "meet on the ground of their common christianity?" Nor is this at all incompatible with the most unyielding opposition to error. Truth has its surest advocate in the man who is able to "give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear." It is he alone that can discriminate between "the precious and the vile," or that can safely "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." If error rush in like a flood, who shall be instrumental in lifting up a standard against it, if not the men of enlightened piety? When we look around with apprehension on the invasions of heresy, such as the church has seen, and will see, and which are wisely permitted, "that the truth may be made manifest;" how else is she to be conducted through the labyrinth, and to keep herself from being bewildered, darkened, and enervated, but by the blessing of God upon her augmented knowledge and acquisition of the truth?

The church of God has sustained no small detriment from the ignorance of good men. How few compared with the mass of her numbers, will be found to be stable, well instructed christians. You see men of zeal, but it is not a zeal that is according to knowledge. They read without thinking, and hear without ever

being at the trouble of examining whether what they hear be according to godliness. Plausible conjecture passes with them for sound reasoning, and bold assertion for rigid argument. And hence, their creed varies with their instructions and they are almost sure to "go along with the last preacher they hear, and the last author they read." It is impossible for persons of this description to attain eminent degrees of usefulness. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." Ignorance, especially in an active mind, becomes almost necessarily the source of error.

That there are those, whose usefulness is confined within no narrow sphere, who are not *distinguished* for their knowledge of divine truth, cannot be denied. The small and scanty stock of knowledge they possess is improved to so much better advantage than that of others who have more, that such instances are not true standards of its intrinsic importance. It is very possible for men to be mere theorists; but then they are not christians. Doctrinal knowledge, unassociated with benevolence and activity, is by far a more useless thing, than benevolence and activity shrouded in no inconsiderable ignorance. But this is no evidence that the character which unites knowledge with holiness is not the character that is truly desirable, and that the men of "light and love" are not they that adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion to the world. I add,

VI. There is a single consideration, on which I would dwell more largely, if I were not afraid of being misinterpreted and misunderstood. *The peculiar character of the age in which we live furnishes a powerful reason for solicitude in relation to the great doctrines of the Bible.*

It is not so much the age of a speculative philosophy, that the friends of truth have any thing to fear on that account. It is not the "unhinging subtlety" of the enemies of the cross, that threatens a removal of the ancient landmarks, were it not for the negligence and indifference of the friends of truth themselves. But from some cause, there is a strange apathy to the truth. It is the age of business, and not of investigation. It is the age of a charity so liberal, a benevolence so active, an excitement so febrile, that nothing seems to satisfy good men, short of that spirit of mutual concession, which savours of a criminal indifference to all religious opinions. Men, from whom the church had hoped better things, are satisfied with very easy and liberal views. Thirty years ago, the church of God aimed at large attainments in grace and knowledge; and in too great a degree, to the unwarrantable exclusion of benevolent action. But the order of things is now changed, and at the expense of truth. And yet, who would not tremble to say, that too much is either done or attempted for the conversion of the world? When we look abroad upon the world, we see that a

field of labour is opening that is unspeakably gratifying to every benevolent mind, and such a field as the church never before saw. But is it not possible that this zeal for christian enterprise needs the baptism of an orthodox spirit; and unless it is more deeply imbued with it, must not only fail of accomplishing what it might otherwise accomplish, but scatter in wide profusion, tares among the wheat? Combinations of truth and error, even in plans of benevolent enterprise, are of very doubtful tendency. Error has always been willing to go with truth, just so far as truth will go with error; whereas truth ought to go with error no farther than error will go with truth; and even in this apparently safe companionship, truth is very apt to become crippled and lame. If I do not survey the signs of the times through a deceptive and gloomy medium, there are dangers in this matter, to which neither the church, nor her watchmen, are sufficiently awake. We should not be surprised, if in this age of business and ignorance, action and concession, it should be found necessary, before the expiration of many years, for another Whitefield or Edwards to sound the note of alarm to the American churches. Nor do I feel at liberty to suppress these reflections while urging the importance of attainment in christian knowledge.

Who duly appreciates the intrinsic excellence of truth? Who duly estimates the place it holds in the purposes of divine mercy toward this apostate

world? Who that would live not to himself, but to him that died for him and rose again; would not grow in knowledge, while he grows in grace? God grant that your self-devotement to his cause, and your active exertions, and your sweetest charities may abound a thousandfold, and that they may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment! We would not exalt one part of the religion of Jesus at the expense of another; but would combine and inweave its intellectual, cordial, and practical excellencies, that "in every thing you may be enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge:" so that you may "all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." If you would be happy in yourselves, and a blessing to all about you, you must be well informed and growing christians; "rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving." And for this I would devoutly pray—that "your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches and the full assurance of understanding, and to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wonder and knowledge!"

And now in bringing this discussion to a close, allow me to remark,

1. That the ministers of the gospel *ought not to be reproached for instructive preaching*. This is the reproach of many a faithful minister. And yet instructive preaching is the best preaching. No man can preach intelligibly and profitably, without explaining and proving the great doctrines of the gospel. In the ordinary method of divine grace, there is no other way in which their people will become wise unto salvation. Would a preacher honestly say to those who have sat under his ministrations, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you ;" with equal honesty, he must say, "I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God." If we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, it is not by walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth. Other things being equal, he is the best, the most profitable, the most successful preacher, who exhibits the most truth. Instructive preaching may offend, because the words of the wise are as goads. But do we now persuade men, or God ? Or do we seek to please men ? for if we yet pleased men, we should not be the servants of Christ. It is a melancholy fact, that orthodoxy is becoming a term of reproach ; that steadfastness in the faith requires unwonted self-denial. Unbending adherence to doctrines has already become a burden, well nigh too oppressive to be borne. Doctrinal instruction is becoming unpopular, and is already too

cold and heartless for the spirit of the age. And yet, my brethren, none of these things should move us. Still let the pulpit teem with all the riches and variety of revealed truth. Both the letter and the spirit of our commission require us to "go and *teach* all nations." At a very great remove from the preaching which our ascended Lord requires, are the vapid and vapoury sermons of a multitude of preachers. Instead of truths, clearly conceived and wisely selected from the vast variety and mighty range of instruction, spread out before them in the scriptures, their discourses are made up of loose and crude appeals to the passions, and at best of the fatiguing repetition of a few common-place thoughts upon the same first principles of divine truth. After all that is said against doctrinal preaching, no man can be a weighty and powerful preacher, whose discourses are destitute of solid instruction.

2. We may see why it is that the scriptures so often *represent the love of the truth, as a conclusive test of christian character.*

That they do so, is perfectly evident. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." It belongs

to the nature of piety to love the truth of God. Impiety may make shipwreck of the faith. The eternal interests of men are suspended upon their believing and loving the essential doctrines of the gospel. Good men do not see any way of becoming pious themselves, but by believing and loving the truth of God; and they see no way by which others can become so. We shall discover our true character, my hearers, in no small degree by our opinions. If we imbibe error, and especially, if it be serious, fundamental error, it will be because we have not sought the truth in the love of it, and have chosen darkness rather than light. How can men be holy, who have not the word of Christ abiding in them? How can men be holy, who oppose the truth of God, when the exercise of a holy temper would infallibly lead them to believe and love it? How far men may go in rejecting the truth of God and yet be good men, let none be hasty in determining. There are doctrines that are fundamental to the gospel, and so essential to it, that to deny them, or any one of them, would subvert the whole gospel itself. And it is very possible for men to be ignorant of some of these doctrines and yet be saved. They may not understand them; they may not discern their connection and importance; and their ignorance in this respect, and their misconceptions, may not prove them to be the enemies of truth and holiness. But while this is an indulgence which christian charity asks and gives, let it be settled in our minds, that no man can under-

stand any one of the fundamental truths of the gospel and reject it, and at the same time be the friend of God. Lord, to whom shall we go, but unto thee? for thou hast *the words of eternal life*; and we know and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

But we add,

3. And we desire to add with emphasis, *Rest not satisfied with mere intellectual attainments in religion*. Many a man, we fear, does rest satisfied with a mere speculative knowledge of the truth of God. Multitudes under the light of the gospel have been educated in the belief, that religion is a mere science. They have been taught to "say their prayers;" to read the Bible; to repeat the catechism; to attend the worship of God on the sabbath; to come to the Lord's table; and here their religion ends. From childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, they grow up under the influence of such a religion, and live and die in all the usages and orthodoxy of their fathers—and mournful to relate, live and die the enemies of God. They have never been made acquainted with the plague of their own hearts; they have never come as ruined and condemned sinners to the cross of Christ; and they have no more knowledge of internal, vital piety, than the heathen. Such was the religion of the scribes and Pharisees. Such was the religion of Paul before his conversion. And if any of us are satisfied

with such a religion, dear hearers, unless sovereign grace interpose, we shall most certainly die in our sins.

A mere intellectual acquaintance with the truth of God is not godliness. "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not *love*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and *understand all mysteries and all knowledge*, and have not *love*, I am nothing." There is many a well informed understanding where there is an unhumbléd heart. "Thou believest there is one God : thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble." Clear and strong perceptions of moral truth only enhance the turpitude and aggravate the guilt of wicked men. "He that *knoweth* his Lord's will, and *doeth it not*, shall be beaten with many stripes." You may see and approve the better, and follow the worse. "They know too much of religion, far too much, for their future comfort, who know more than they obey." The truths you understand must be loved and obeyed. However humbling, they must be loved and obeyed. However particular and personal in their application, they must be loved and obeyed. However offensive to the carnal mind, they must be loved and obeyed. Yes, *they must be loved and obeyed !* And this is the religion, my respected audience, which it is the design of these lectures to urge upon you. A knowledge that puffeth up and does not edify ; a knowledge that justifies obduracy and impenitence, and does not excite tenderness

and susceptibility, would only become a savour of death unto death. While we therefore respectfully solicit your attention to some of the more important doctrines of the gospel, in the name and by the authority of the God of truth and holiness, we claim for him and his truth the submission of your hearts. As ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. They are no obscure and deep points of speculation, that are about to be presented to you. Few, *very few* such points are to be found in the Bible. They are plain, solemn, interesting truths, which we hope may not only enlighten your minds and our own, but find a passage to our hearts. And God of his infinite mercy grant, that they may be so preached and so accompanied by his omnipotent Spirit, that we who preach may be helpers of one another's joy, and you who hear may be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

THE LAW OF GOD.

ROM. vii. 12.—“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”

THE seventh chapter of Romans is a compendium of experimental theology. It is a proper standard of that kind of religious experience which alone is enlightened, genuine, and everlasting. It remains an inspired protest against extravagance, airy conceits, presumptuous hopes, lawless fervours, spurious joys, unholy satisfactions, and heartless forms in religion. Against ignorance, presumption, pretension with no experience, and affections not “the fruit of the Spirit,” its total testimony is lifted; and those only, whose piety is acquitted by this criterion, “shall be able to stand” the fiery ordeal of eternity. The exercises it describes are certainly gracious: but they are initial, and respect mainly

the discoveries, feelings, and desires, of a soul in the process of introduction to the spiritualities of religion ; commencing with his previous state, advancing with his progress, and rejoicing in his consummated attachment to the Redeemer. That soul is doubtless the Apostle himself. Paul is not more the historian, than the theme, of the lucid narrative. The experiences of such a noble of the christian empire may well be given by the Great King of Saints, for the direction and the assurance of his inferior subjects.

In this narration it is remarkable how much is said of the law of God. Its use and ministry are indicated, its connection with the gospel seen, and its distinctness fully manifested. The law of God is evidently the foundation of all the experiences recorded in this wonderful chapter : and since the nature of mind, of depravity, and of religion, remains the same in all ages, we may safely extend the proposition—it is the basis of all genuine religion.

With such views of the law of God, it is not wonderful, my brethren, that we have given it an early place in these lectures ; since this may be fairly denominated a criterion-subject, influencing essentially the total system of our religious belief. I solicit your candid and patient attention then to the following questions :

What is the law of God ?

What right has God to impose his law upon us ?

Why did he impose such a law?

What concern have we with his law, since to be saved by it is impossible?

What are the attributes of excellence that commend the law of God to the approbation and affection of all his moral subjects?

After answering these questions, respecting *the nature and relations of the law of God*, we shall mention *some lessons of wisdom thence deducible—some, instead of many, thence resulting.*

I. WHAT IS THE LAW OF GOD?

A law, in its most general sense, is a rule of action. Its object is to regulate personal conduct. The laws of nature and of matter, in all their various forms, are but the code of order which Jehovah hath legislated for himself, and of which he is at once the maker and the subject, the enactor and the executive, in the administration of infinite providence. To speak of these laws as if they were their own authors, or as if they were themselves conscious agents, or as if they were sovereign efficient in the system of things, like the kindred anomaly that deifies *nature*, involves such dark absurdity, to say nothing of its atheism, as would disgrace the mind of a sensible pagan. What then are we to think of nominal christians who habituate the phraseology? Certainly that they are “wilfully ignorant” of that glorious Intelligence

who, retired
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied.

But we are treating now of the moral universe ; the illimitable empire of mind ; the circle of wonders and of glories within which expatiate the numerous orders of accountable and immortal creatures. Matter was made for mind ; and the laws of the former are all subservient to the interests of the intellectual department of existence. The one is transient and tributary ; the other permanent and ultimate. The material universe, with all its gorgeous scenery and astounding complications of mechanism, is inferior—infinately inferior to those eternal agents, and qualities, and relations, for which it was made and to which it ministers ; while it may be regarded as the mere staging on which the mighty drama is displayed. How important and how grand is theological science !

The law of God may be defined—*that eternal rule which he has prescribed for the government of minds ; commanding what is right, prohibiting what is wrong, and with appropriate sanctions supporting the universal interests of order,* holiness, and happiness.* It has a precept and a penalty ; an object and a perfect adaptation to its end. It includes all angels, all devils, and all men, in its perfect jurisdiction. Penalty is essential to its being, as law ; without which indeed it might embody much good counsel, advice, and even entreaty ; it might advertise possibly the amiable weakness and the pitiable confusion of the Lawgiver ; but his authority, his majesty, his independence, and his glory, it never could achieve. In

short, it could be no law, without an adequate penalty, determinately made, fully propounded, and forever sustained. That penalty is specifically given in the scriptures. It is there called "death;" and this—though not alone—is perhaps its most frequent appellation. Natural death, as we commonly speak, though one of the consequences of sin in this mixed probationary system, is—we are prepared to prove—no part of the proper penalty of the law. It is none: unless every other misery, such for example as the curse of toil; the pains and subjected condition of "the suffering sex;" the thorns, thistles, and noxious herbage with which the earth is overgrown; and the hostile revolt of all the irrational tribes against the lordship and the felicity of man—unless all these, with every pang we feel and every tear we shed, are proper original constituents of penalty. That all misery is a monster in the dominions of God, and that sin has in some way introduced it all, are true and safe positions. But it is quite another matter to aver that all the "variety of wretchedness" we suffer is but the formal developement of penalty strictly legal. We are not now speaking of the gospel; of the system of grace; of mediatorial constitution and government; and of evils that exist generally in those abodes of mortality to which we appertain: but of the law of God, which, however connected with our present condition, has a nature and a character of its own, and must be viewed as it is in order to understand its influence upon other things that are.

Death is the image of accomplished ruin, of desolation and despair. One sin entails this penalty on every offender. It is the curse of God. It is seen in what is certainly revealed of primitive transgressors, the original seniors of disobedience, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." It is called "everlasting punishment"—and "everlasting fire" which was "prepared for the devil and his angels."

It is legal or judicial death; and unless, in human instances, its sentence is repealed through the mediatorial economy, it is finally executed on all the impenitent, who "depart" from Christ, accursed, into the eternal misery which angel apostates first incurred. Much darkness hath been induced from literalizing the word "death." In the original threatening to the progenitors of mankind, it is not literal but judicial death that is respected. The same is demonstrably true in the Epistle to the Romans throughout. Thus, when it is said, "death reigned from Adam to Moses—many be dead—sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned—the wages of sin is death—if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die—to be carnally minded is death," and so onward, literal death is not meant; neither spiritual death, which is but a figurative phrase for total sinfulness; but judicial death, or death in the eye of law, condemnation, ill-desert, exposure to wrath. Judicial death becomes by protraction eternal death; and this in every instance known to us, except where the

grace of the gospel is secured to christians. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse—that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident—being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed—he that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses—how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation—every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."

But if the law is thus armed with a fearful penalty, adequate to the interests it guards, the wrong it avenges, and the good it intends, so has it primarily a most excellent precept. Without this also it could not be law; though it might be cruelty, caprice, and the purest folly imaginable. It requires love; supreme to God, equal and impartial to our fellows, perfect in degree, holy in nature, and perpetual in exercise.

The law is substantially and unchangeably what it has now been described. Toward us however its forms vary. The whole written word of God is often denominated his law. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them." The law is often identified with the decalogue or ten commandments. Its

whole substance has been condensed still more by the Saviour, who comprizes the whole in two great precepts, on which, he declares, "hang all the law and the prophets." The apostle tells us that it "is spiritual;" in which he seems to condense it to its utmost, as it were a flame of ethereal purity, radiating from the throne of God, and exacting a corresponding purity and perfection of all the moral offspring of the Lord God Almighty.

What a jurisdiction is this ! the only perfect one in existence. Other laws regulate appearances, manners, and the exterior alone ; this affects the soul, inspires sincerity, proscribes "the thought of foolishness," and enjoins a spotless and durable obedience. It subjects absolutely every mind, holy or unholy, in the moral dominions of God, to its authority, if not to its obedience. Hence it occurs to consider the question,

II. WHAT RIGHT HAS GOD TO IMPOSE HIS LAW UPON US ?

This question is often asked, and very often entertained in thought. It admits the fact that God hath done it ; and seems further to admit also that he had a right to do it. But wherein does that right consist, on what is it founded, and can it be vindicated ? The spirits of piety, who know God, have a way of resolving all such questions. They argue with ease, and often with infallibility, from the perfections of Jehovah. "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ?

for thou only art holy." This position is not more comprehensive than safe. It may be trusted forever and applied universally. It is as certain as the infinite excellency of God ; from which it is a plain and philosophical deduction. Still, in the present instance, it is not sufficiently specific. It does not assign the particular star, in the glorious constellation, upon which depends the identical right of the Lawgiver, to throw his perfect jurisdiction over all minds, holy or unholy, willing or unwilling, and put them all under a positive responsibility which they can neither modify nor avoid.

Besides, the perfections of God, though they constitute a perfect demonstration that whatever he does is right, are, we affirm, no foundation of his right of legislation. We rejoice to know of one king, to whose administration it is no vainglorious compliment, but a maxim of simple verity, to say that *the King can do no wrong*. But does this truth constitute his title to reign ? How is it in political society ? May a citizen dictate laws to the commonwealth, merely because he may be a competent jurist, a deserving and benevolent character ? Not at all. He must be legitimately installed. A relation, involving his right to legislate, must first be constituted ; and from that relation flows the prerogative. Many an incompetent man sustains the relation ; many a worthless incumbent occupies a seat of high constitutional authority ; and many a worthy and qualified individual, as all the world knows, is condemned to a private and powerless station, because

the worthless, the ambitious, the disqualified, can better clamber into place than he and are preferred by the doating multitude. It is not then the wisdom, the goodness, or in any way the infinite perfection of God, that founds his right as moral governor: not any or all of his essential attributes, not his glorious and perfect nature; but the relations he sustains to his own moral creatures. He is their Maker, Owner, Ruler, Judge, and King; and by necessary and indestructible right, founded in these relations to his own, he may come, as he does, to each of them, with language as imperative as this: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy powers; Thou shalt love thy fellow as thyself; and this, all this, perfectly and perpetually, on pain of my judicial and visited displeasure." This is what he does, and has a right to do. Thus, in the preface to the decalogue, he first installs himself in the legislative relation; saying, "I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage:" then his mandates are uttered, and Israel acknowledges the Sovereign of worlds; saying, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me;" and so of the others. But for this relation, he could have no right to impose even the ten commandments, or any one of them, notwithstanding their intrinsic excellency. Otherwise, a mere mortal, as Moses, might impose such laws, if he could make them; and then they would possess a kind of authority too refined, impalpable, and baseless, to compel the assent or convince the understand-

ing of man or angel. In this case, they would lose their appropriate character. They would cease to be law; though they might pass for excellent suggestions, friendly hints, fine maxims, and rules of pure or possible expediency. Such a debilitated code, such sanctionless and contemptible statutes, mandatory in form but merely suasive in fact, would operate only as a solvent to virtue, a premium to vice, and a facility to licentiousness. But who is God? and who are his creatures? Are not we dependent on him, absolutely, perpetually, universally? Dependent for existence, for all our proper attributes, for prosperity and happiness? This accords with the moral sense of angels and the common sense of men. Let us illustrate it. Suppose the relations not to exist; and then God comes to us with his law: we reply, "the very challenge of obedience is iniquitous; the very attempt to impose any law on us, without our consent by voluntary compact plighted, is oppressive; we are not thy creatures or thy property, O God; and though it is lawful for any one to do what he will with his own, yet we are our own, not thine; as a Being thou art older, mightier, wiser than we are; but this is no warrant of usurpation on thy part or plea for servility on ours. Might and right are different things, and though we should succumb to superior force we never will consent to tyrannous aggression."

But the relations do exist; and hence how deeply and immoveably are founded the right of the Lawgiver and the duty of the subject! Every mortal feels the

practical influence, in proportion as he apprehends the premises. Let us consider our dependence, and God's relations; let us fully admit that we are created, appropriated, and subordinate; and then question, if honestly we can, the right of "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords," to be our Legislator forever. The enemies of God always avoid the premises, just because they can in no other way avoid the conclusion. It may be safely asserted that a rational and moral being, such as man, in proportion as he fully discerns in their proper evidence the existence and relations of his Maker, is mentally and morally necessitated to apprehend also the right of Jehovah to legislate and by consequence his own absolute obligation to obey.

But, it will be asked, may not this right be abused, exercised improperly, and vitiated by iniquity? Certainly it may. Whether it will or not depends on the character of the Lawgiver. That one possessed of power may administer it amiss, may make unequal, inapposite, or injurious laws, is just as evident as that one, without the power, might make good laws, but could not impose them or constitute them laws at all. Whether God ever does abuse his power as a Lawgiver, has indeed been made a question: and the answers have not only been various, but they have divided the moral universe. One immense party, the incomparable and eternal majority of creatures, have held the negative; have sincerely maintained the competency of God; and

even asserted his glory and perfections. The other party—for there are but two—have broached the proud affirmative; have oppugned the rectitude of the laws and his who made them; have pretended virtue in rebellion; have vaunted their own skill, goodness, and desert, as superior to his; have revolted, murmured, hated, and blasphemed; and many have become implacably hostile, malignant, and even eternal, in their deep incurable aversion.

But what is the truth? “Is the law sin?” We may discover in the sequel. It now occurs to consider,

III. WHY DID GOD IMPOSE SUCH A LAW?

This question is capable of great perversion; since it is often asked in a manner vain and vague, as if to solve doubts that have no existence or to remove difficulties that are only verbal or imaginary. In this style it might be asked always, no matter what the name or nature of the law; and then it belongs to the class of “foolish or unlearned questions,” which an Apostle has ordered us to “avoid,” and which unhappily constitute in some circles the current wisdom, the circulating medium, of misguided and truthless speculation. Alas! that such mortals should be immortal, such reasoners accountable, such philosophers obnoxious to damnation; and yet voluntarily blinded to the infinite glories of truth and righteousness!

But with us the question is serious. Its answer is in order to piety. The more we understand of the ways of God, the better can we worship and the more enjoy.

He also challenges our inspection. "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? The King's strength also loveth judgment. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious; and his righteousness endureth forever. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth forever. I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." Our object is to show the principles of divine legislation; to prove their excellence; and thence to infer the excellency of his law.

Are the relations of right and wrong founded in the nature of things? Is there any thing properly arbitrary in the enactments of God? Is any thing right because he commands it? or does he command it because it is right? What relation has his law to happiness, to order, to reason, to nature, to evidence? Does he care for utility? Does he pursue certain ends, and good ones, in all his legislation? Has he given us such a law, in its spirit and modifications, because his wisdom and goodness approved it as perfect? To all these questions, we reply, There is nothing capricious, passionate, tyrannical, or erring, in our Lawgiver. He is the profoundest Student, I should say Master, of utility, in the universe. To him it appertains to judge, as the infinite Guardian of his own dominions, what is

best. He is the glorious Conservator of happiness in the moral system. To him it seemed necessary to make such a law and to maintain its inviolability. And why may not he do what seems good in his sight, since he alone of beings sees things all just as they are, since to him appearances and realities are the same and nothing appears good but what is good? The nature of things he has indeed constituted; but the criterion of that nature existed eternally in himself and is the congenial offspring of his own glorious perfections: so that right and wrong, as relations, are ultimately resolvable into his own eternal attributes, as like or unlike them. Whatever tends to happiness is right; whatever tends to misery is wrong. Here is the foundation of his law. We may speak of his statutes as moral and positive; and in form or circumstance they may vary so as to warrant the classification. But their nature, whether resulting from the nature of things, or the relations of things, whether general or particular, whether temporary or permanent, whether mysterious or manifest, their nature is one and the same, is excellent alone, is worthy of the incomparable excellence of God. He has made us capable of discerning, as he discerns, the immutable moral difference of right and wrong, of happiness and misery; only that his discernment is perfect, universal, and never impeded or confused. His discernment is eternal intuition, the discernment of Omniscience. But we discern elementarily and in principle the very same opposition of qualities. To

murder, torture, and calumniate another, is wrong because it is contrary to law : but the law has forbidden it because it tends to misery, and because no man would think it right for him to receive such treatment just as it suited the mood of his fellow to dispense it. But laws must be impartial. They must act reciprocally between equals, and warrant or proscribe to each that course of conduct which himself would warrant or proscribe to another. Hence, there is a sense in which every man practically approves the law of God: he judges others in light of its equal principles, and accuses or acquits them just as they are or are not seen to do to others what they would that others should do to them. Here is a moral dilemma out of which for the sinner to extricate himself, if he can. God has so organized his mind that, unless blinded by ignorance of facts or selfishness of principles, he always applies the same criterion of right which God himself applies. "Out of his own mouth" will God condemn him. Were it not for the spirit of perversity, the moral homage of every human being would be directly and ingenuously rendered to the law of God. "They are a law unto themselves;" and must get rid of their moral nature, before they can escape their moral responsibility. The wicked themselves are sometimes acute and accurate casuists. They know very well what a christian ought to be and how he ought to act. They believe in the existence of moral evil, in its odious nature and desert of punishment, when they are the objects of it; and it is only when

they are the subjects of it, that their doubts, and difficulties, and palliatives begin. They acknowledge goodness, when they are made the objects of it, in certain affecting cases, where selfishness has no bribe or place to operate; and it is only when their own obligations to goodness are pressed, that their cavils and excuses occur to them. Now, of all these facts and developements, millions of them probably in the case of every sinner, will the cause of righteousness be availed in the day of judgment. God will rescue the truth from perversion; arm every conscience with its "glittering sword;" vindicate himself to the conviction of the universe; and confound all hell with the evidence of his rectitude. Meanwhile, the inconceivably vaster multitudes above will be ravished with the spectacle. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. O Lord, thou art our God; we will exalt thee, we will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. Alleluia. Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. And again they said, Alleluia. And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thun-

derings, saying Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

I proposed to answer the question,

IV. WHAT CONCERN HAVE WE WITH THE LAW, SINCE TO BE SAVED BY IT IS IMPOSSIBLE?

It is not of the nature of law to show mercy. This pertains, in possible or provided cases, to the sovereignty of the Lawgiver. A law that provides for pardon, provides for its own prostration. It is an ill instrument of order, a worthless guardian of right; in short, its nature is destroyed, and it is law no longer. Hence, law can absolve the innocent alone. Towards the guilty, as the organ of pure justice, "the law worketh wrath" and anticipates nothing but executed penalty. It does not even propose, require, or recognise atonement. This belongs to the supreme arbitration of the Lawgiver. Thus God, when we were all guilty, forecasting our salvation by means that should leave the ermine of his righteousness not only unstained and unsullied, but even brightened in its purity to the vision of his subjects; God, knowing how he could answer and even transcend the ends of punishment in a way of atonement, accepted the costly sacrifice from his own self-immolated Son, that he might magnify his inviolable justice in "a new and living way"—that he "might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

But was it any part of the design of the Saviour's propitiatory death to abolish the law of his Father? or to impair its jurisdiction? or to put the attainder of

cruel on its terrific sanctions? Precisely the opposite of this, was the purpose and the achievement of his expiation. He "magnified the law and made it honourable:" but he also introduced a way of salvation, that was not legal, but evangelical, gracious, and worthy of eternal praise. When, on his account, we are released from the penalty, we are not absolved from the precept, of the law. He has not purchased indulgences for his people, or consecrated transgression, or commanded licentiousness. Consequently, we are eternally obligated to holiness. The gospel is so constituted that its benefits cannot be made ours, without that cordial approbation of the law, which involves essential conformity to its spirit, and which is included in the very nature of obedience to the gospel. Hence our moral concern with the law is inalienable. It instructs us into the nature of duty, sin, ill-desert, spiritual destitution, our need of a Saviour, our awful liabilities, and the absolute necessity of accepting Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

It appears probable to me that eternal life never could be the entailment or result merely of law. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who doeth these things shall live by them;" that is, as long as he does them he shall live, he shall be justified: his obedience and his justification shall parallel each other as far as the former extends. It was so with "the angels that kept not their first estate." For a season they perfectly obeyed, and they

lived as long. But was this confirmation? was it eternal life? where are they now? God has probably given a probation of perfect obedience to all his moral offspring; and if, according to the conditions constituted, their obedience endured through the allotted period, they were then confirmed in holiness and happiness forever—and this is life eternal. But here it results from covenant, not law. It was not indeed the covenant of grace, nor the probation of grace; it was still a covenant, by sovereign goodness vouchsafed, and appended to law, but of a nature all its own. Law is one thing; covenant is another. God is under no obligations to institute a covenant with one of his moral creatures. To withhold it originally would be no injury. Thus, should he create a moral agent, place him under law, tell him that his justification should always coincide with his obedience, and tell him no more; and should such a subject obey through any given period, and should God then in a moment abstract his being without any pain inflicted and thus annihilate him forever—where would be the injury? Would not perfect equity balance the accounts of both parties? I think it would. True, such a case probably never occurred and may never occur. It is however not the less proper by way of illustration. “An angel from heaven” probably never preached the gospel, and certainly not “an other gospel;” yet the supposition is made by an apostle to illustrate our duty in other cases. Apart from what might be conjectured as to the consequences if our first

parents had retained their integrity in Eden ; and apart from the nature of the national covenant made with the Israelites at Sinai, concerning which opinions vary, I have yet to learn if eternal life is any where represented in scripture as the earnings possibly of human obedience. "For the wages of sin is death : but eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

The law however has its important uses. One of these, it has been already shown, is that it subserves the experience of genuine religion in the soul. It is used by the Spirit in his gracious work of regeneration, sanctification, and even glorification. It teaches us the spirituality of duty, sin, obedience, and requirement. It thus revolutionizes the ancient antinomianism of the soul ; corrects its mistakes ; enlightens, purifies, humbles, and convinces it ; and thus inspires right views of the nature of religion, preparing it for a cordial and an intelligent acceptance of Christ. This was precisely its ministry in the case of the apostle, as recorded in the context. Previous to this process of law-work in his soul, he was a self-glorying Pharisee. His outward character was indeed extraordinary. It was "blameless." His morals were unblemished. His religion was cultivated with great proficiency, and exemplified

with singular consistency, courage, and zeal. Could one mortal of our species have been saved on his own account, and without the grace that is in Christ Jesus, that mortal were Saul of Tarsus. His own correct manner of life was an object of envy or applause to his countrymen, and a subject of congratulation and self-complacency to himself. It constituted his justification created his hope, and sustained his perseverance. It was "life" to him; for, as he says, "I was alive without the law once;" that is, without any just conception of the law, as if it were a body without a soul. So he kept it, and gloried in his own sufficiency. Like a bankrupt merchant, who precludes an examination of his accounts, trades upon his own fancied capital, and feels as solvent as if he owed nothing, and as if his income were affluence. Now, by what means came he to the knowledge of his own deplorable bankruptcy and the ruin of his spiritual affairs? How was he brought to stop payment, to meet his creditors, to surrender all, and to compound with their mercy without the fraction of a farthing in the pound. Answer—through the knowledge of the law, of its spirituality, perfection, eternal excellency, and uncompromising exactitude. Now his righteousness vanished, his hope was extinguished, his sins—like the ghosts of murdered men—rose from the dead to haunt and convulse his bosom, and his anguish of soul was acute and ingenuous as nothing but a corresponding experience can adequately evince. Hear his own account. "For I was

alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." By what means came this spiritual knowledge of the law to illumine his perceptions ? I answer, by means of a fixed and honest attention, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, to the nature and terms of the law. "What shall we say then ? Is the law sin ? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law : for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." By "the law" he means comprehensively the whole code ; by "the commandment" a single precept, and that the tenth, of the decalogue. But why fix on this ? The answer is—that the tenth is the only one of the ten that is expressly spiritual in its terms : "Thou shalt not covet ;" that is, thou shalt not desire *any* forbidden or unlawful object. The word "lust," as it here occurs, is much more generic and extensive in the original than in our English translation. It is often used in the New Testament in a perfectly general sense, for desire ; sometimes in a good sense for holy desire. Here it means any wayward inclination of the soul towards a forbidden object. His previous views of the law left that fountain of concupiscence unexplored. He was almost or quite unconscious of its existence. He had never brought it into judgment or compared it with that etherial standard that demands "truth in the inward

parts." Hence he mistook every thing. Like other Jews, his piety expatiated only in the exterior; and here was the cardinal mistake of the nation. On this account they refused a spiritual, and expected a secular, Messiah. But it is a mistake by no means confined to the Jews. It is the sin and misery of human nature. Spirituality marks the boundaries of the kingdom of heaven, including all the spiritual and excluding all the carnal of the species. It is the index and the criterion of true religion, as contradistinguished from fabulous and vain, from imaginings of folly, and doings of self-righteousness. What a transformation is presented in the example of Paul! What a glorious convert! How differently does he speak and act, think and feel, suffer and enjoy, after he came to know and to approve the moral law, that mirror of the divine perfections! "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"—or, according to the bold personification of the original, "that sin might become an exceeding sinner!" He adds, "For we know that the law is spiritual;" not the tenth commandment only, but the whole law. The jurisdiction of God affects the spirits of men; aims at the soul; demands the heart; and comparatively annihilates all consideration of our moral exterior. And is it wrong in this?

No ! It is holy, just, and good." And, says every true worshipper, "I consent unto the law that it is good. I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It remains to answer the inquiry,

V. WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF EXCELLENCE THAT COMMEND THE LAW OF GOD TO THE APPROBATION AND AFFECTION OF ALL HIS MORAL SUBJECTS ?

Certain it is that God himself loves his law ; that all virtuous beings love it ; and that to love, obey, and exemplify it perfectly will be the eternal history of the ransomed. Without conformity to its excellence and delight in its nature, piety is a delusion, virtue a fiction, and happiness a dream. It is one of the sterling glories of the gospel, that, through the efficacy of faith, it sanctifies, assimilates, and finally perfectionates the christian, according to this eternal standard. There must be some adequate reasons then for this authentic regard to the law of God : and what are they ?

Our text informs us, in three words : "the law is holy, and just, and good." What a eulogium ! Simple, brief, true. How then could it be better ? Who could alter and not injure it ? "The law of the Lord is perfect." Let us contemplate for a moment, and

with distinctness, the three characteristic excellencies just recited.

1. The law is *holy*. Holiness in God means, comprehensively, and somewhat abstractly, his perfect moral excellence: in creatures, it means consecration to God or whatever coincides with his moral nature and the ends which he pursues in his moral administration. The law then is holy, because of its moral excellence, its purity, perfection, and unsuffering opposition to sin: and because of its relation to God, as his law, his moral similitude, and the instrument by which his holy reign is manifested and maintained.

2. It is *just*. It is equal, impartial, and exact, in rendering to all their dues. It represents to each, the rights of all; founds duties on rights, and respects not the persons of its subjects. It is just in its demands; for these are always commensurate with the capacity of its subjects, never exacting more at any given moment than what equals the ability of the subject to perform. Its demand is always measured by the powers possessed; otherwise it would plainly be unjust. To exceed ability in the least is as really unrighteous as to exceed it in the greatest. It is this eternal correspondence between ability and obligation that manifests his righteousness, who made the law and who thus appeals to our moral judgment; "are not my ways equal?" Equal they could never be, did he command what we could not perform; did he transcend our capabilities in his requisitions; did he challenge impossibilities of his

creatures on pain of that death which constitutes the penalty of his law, or did he challenge them at all. That he never did such a thing, that he never will do it, that he never could do it, because "he cannot deny himself," are positions to my mind as evident and as important quite as that of his existence. He is perfectly just himself; and his law is but the representative of his nature and the organ of his government. The talents of his servants vary in degree, in nature, and in form; yet, as he dispenses, so he requires of "every man, according to his several ability." The man who has ten talents is obligated on the same principle as he that has five, or two, or one; and that is, to improve what he has, to exercise the powers he possesses, and to do his will "according to the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man hath and not according to that he hath not." I can scarce conceive of a sentiment more subversive of all righteousness, or more ruinous to the glory of the divine moral government, than that God may demand of us what we have no power to perform. Disinclination may prevent us from obedience; but that will not impair the justice of the requisition, for it implies the possession of adequate ability; and sin does but "commend the righteousness of God," while it challenges from his justice its appropriate recompense.

The law is *just* also in what it inflicts. It is just in its penalty. This position is not disputable, though often disputed. I am willing however to admit that it is, in its manifold relations, the most terrific and trying sentiment of revealed religion. I go further; it is the most terrific and trying sentiment in the universe. I shudder, and tremble, and doubt—and pray, and submit, and believe, whenever I think of it! O that volumed interminable wrath! that dreadful “hell-fire, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched!” Great and holy Lord God! “who knoweth the power of thine anger?”

That this penalty is just, I said, is an indisputable position. But why indisputable? Christian! whoever you are, why do *you* not dispute it? Shall I tell you? First, because of the clear evidence that God has revealed the fact and decided the question; and second, because you have confidence in his perfections as one who understands himself, who will do right, and who will also vindicate his rectitude hereafter to the conviction of the universe. It is in this confidence that we begin our religion in this world; it is in this confidence that we increase and purify and retain it; and it is in this confidence that we find the balm of holy resignation, and the peace of solid piety, ministering strength and establishment to our souls. Speculation may sometimes assist us; philosophy may look at causes, utilities, and results; vanity may deny our short-sightedness; and “school-taught pride, dissembling all it

can," may profess an exaltation above the necessity of faith in God. After all, piety will recur to first principles; will look at the awfully conclusive evidence of the fact; will rest in the simplicities of revealed statement, and say with confidence and even joy, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." For one, I know of no safe or honourable retreat on this point from "the law and the testimony." Nothing less than the evidence of inspiration should ever conciliate my own faith in the doctrine of eternal punishment. But where that evidence abounds, I compassionate with all my soul the man that asks for more! I fear he will get what he asks; and that God, taking him at his word, will add personal experience to divine testimony; and thus make it credible, to one who thinks it insufficient when alone! nor can I leave this branch of the argument without a word of exhortation. I affectionately beseech you, my beloved hearers, to do "as ye have us for an ensample"—to confide in God fully to explain it, while you cordially admit with Paul the justice of the law! You can never prove the contrary. It may seem hard to you, to whom sin seems innocent. Besides, you are an interested party; you are infinitely interested! And are you sure that sin has never blinded your eyes, or selfishness darkened your judgment, or impenitence destroyed your sympathies with righteousness? This only would I learn of you in the case; Are you a Judge, or a criminal? Is it likely that you are right in contrariety to God? If you were perfectly holy, would you not judge differently? Are you wise to venture

your decision against his who made you? Can you accept grace, while you cavil at justice? Will dissent and murmuring alter the fact, or save one soul, or help you in a possible extremity, or please the Judge Eternal? Surrender then, I implore you; surrender at discretion! Acquiesce; confide; and wait the explanations of eternity. "The obedience of faith," on this article pre-eminently, is exacted of you; and I know of no way, philosophical, devotional, or honest, I repeat it, in which faith may be legitimately superseded or reduced. God knows all things. Immensity; eternity; the manifold interests and relations of all creatures; the sum of blessedness; the utilities of judicial misery; and his own wisdom in the existence, the perpetuity, and the punishment of sin; are understood by him alone: and him you must devoutly honour or impiously arraign; must vindicate or criminate; must glorify or blaspheme. Make then your election. You cannot impeach the law, without condemning the Law-giver: and as to the absurdity which a proud presumption ventures to allege in the premises, remember that the greatest absurdity ever seen in the universe is this—that a mortal man should think himself wiser, better, or more compassionate, than his Maker!

3. The law is *good*. This proposition, taken distinctly, means, I think, that the law tends to happiness; that it loves, promotes, and guaranties the happiness of the universe. The question is not what kind of a system has God created? for this is known. Nor, Had he

a right to create such an one? for this is admitted. These things then being premised, we must admit that the law is good; for the following are all the alternatives of which the case admits, and the only defensible one of these affirms the goodness of the law: namely, either we must have no law in the system; or we must suggest another law that can be shown to be better; or we must have the law that God has actually adopted: and if no better law can be advanced, we must admit not only that it is good, but the best possible. We have two positions to refute, in order to establish the third. And who will affirm that a lawless universe of rational creatures would be an improvement? a universe in which injuries might be given with impunity and suffered without redress! where mischief and misery should be no more forbidden than kindness and beneficence! where malignity would be sinless, slander authorized, and murder uncensured! where there could be no motive adequate to order; no obligation; no rights, wrongs, or duties; where a Byron, "a Borgias, or a Catalinè," should be just as estimable as a Howard, a Luther, or a Paul! where Satan and Gabriel might be equally aloof from condemnation or suspicion, and where the only sin would consist in blaming the sinner! In such a system, there could exist no centre; no cement; no common bond; no fellowship; no community of interests; no happiness; no security; no peace; no corrective; no hope! And if the end of such a desired state of things be to avoid the exist-

ence and the relations of a hell, let us pause before we aver the wisdom of a project that must elaborately defeat itself. The whole universe on that hypothesis would be a hell ; and the prison would be identified with the empire. What man so much an ideot, or so much a maniac, to desire such a universe of misery, such a chaos of utter despair !

It remains to find, if we can, a better law than that of God. If the penalty were less, it would be another law ; but who can prove that it would be a better one ? The being, adequate to such proof, must be every way the paramount of God : he must be more knowing than Omniscience, wiser than Infinite Wisdom, better than Eternal Love ! Who but God understands all the interests which law is framed to represent, and penalty enacted to defend ? A less penalty—would that suffice ? what, when sin is so desperate already that, to gain its purpose, it defies the universe, makes nothing of God, and laughs at “ eternal damnation ? ” There would be no adequate force in a sanction, which would leave to rebellion the solace of hope, the power of finished expiation, and the pledge of ultimate recovery. It is the exclusion of hope, which constitutes the power of penalty to instruct, to warn, and to prevent transgression. It is this, which defines “ the second death ; ” which interprets to all the penalty that is threatened ; and which supplies perhaps the greatest possible motive, known to God himself, to deter from sin. If you allege that even this is incompetent, since sin abounds :

I answer, it is probable that sin has infected in fact but an inconceivably small proportion of the vast community of worlds which people the dominions of God ; I answer, that the inference from its partial prevalence that none is prevented, and that more will not be perfectly and eternally prevented by means of its actual punishment and its gracious pardon, as illustrated in hell and heaven forever, is inconsiderate and vain ; I answer, that the same reasoning, applied to the present world, would abolish law, unhinge society, and make a vast Aceldama of the globe we inhabit ; and finally, I answer, that all the innumerable habitations of the universe constitute but one empire under God ; that all are mutually and eternally related ; that the history of each will have its influence on all the others ; that events, such as have occurred in that department to which we belong, shall be rehearsed in other departments, and with lasting effect, for the instruction, admonition, and preservation, of millions as many as the individuals of this ; and all this probably as the appropriate means of ETERNALLY PREVENTING ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF SIN, after the scheme of our system shall be conducted to its consummation ! “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God ; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Here, I have no doubt, is the final cause of hell’s perpetuity—the utility of which God will make it the eternal occasion !

Otherwise, that is, if no use could be made of it, it is but a just and necessary deduction, from his perfect attributes, who swears by his own existence that he has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," that hell would be instantly and forever annihilated !

Let us look for a moment at the precept of the law ; and see if it be not good, and if we are the sages that could change it for the better. Do we object to its spirituality ? to its cognizance of motives ? to its high exaction of internal purity and benevolence ? What improvement then could we allege ? The law must respect outward conduct alone ; must be a mere regulator of the mechanics of action ; must induce an authorized system of decent hypocrisy, fictitious goodness, and holy grimace ! And this is the suggested improvement !

Think of the object of legal requisition. It is love ! Is not this good ? Does it not tend to happiness ? Can any other source of communicated happiness be soberly compared with this ? Were love always and universally prevalent, how much misery would exist ? How came misery to exist, but by breaking the law of God ? Was the law given to be broken, or to be kept ? Is God pleased with sin or holiness ? How much happiness then, did the law, as the grand instrument of moral administration, directly and naturally intend ? I answer, happiness, happiness alone, perfect happiness ; universal, infinite, eternal happiness ; and this to the exclusion of every adverse principle or event. Is the law good ? or could purblind mortals legislate a better ?

One aspect yet remains to be presented of the excellency of the law. We have all seen its objective goodness, or that which it really tends to produce to others. We are all sensible of the good of being the objects of love; and scarcely a reprobate or demon exists who could not be made to acknowledge it. But shall we forget its subjective goodness? the happiness its very exercise produces? What feelings conceivable or possible, like those of pure love, to beatify their possessor? God himself is blessed forevermore; "God is love:" and were he not love, he could not be blessed. How godlike the blessedness of love! O what essential beatitude, what fellowship divine, to have our whole capacities full and overflowing with this elemental heaven! "Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good." And God is good who gave it. And let all his creatures love, and praise him, who is forever worthy! I only add, that the goodness of the law is identified with that of the Lawgiver; and that it will be the prosperous concern of his government to make that goodness indubitable, in a way of progressive demonstration and progressive conviction, through the infinite cycles of eternity. The period is at hand when not a doubter on this point will exist even in hell! and even there the abhorred conviction will increase forever that the law is good.

Having thus considered, though in rapid outline, the questions proposed, respecting the nature and relations of the law of God, I shall in the conclusion crave your

patience, while I briefly present a few of the lessons of wisdom thence deducible.

1. *The absurdity, sin, and danger of antinomianism.* This very comprehensive word was well invented, I believe by the great apostle of the Reformation, to brand any sentiment that dishonoured or opposed the law of God. Its etymology answers to its sense and warrants its application ; meaning enmity or opposition to law. Hence we are authorized to say that there exists in our world, in our hearts, and our reasonings, just as much antinomianism as there is disconformity to law in theory or practice. As a heresy, while it is among the vilest and while it is the great parent of them all, it is an abstract one ; being in terms professed, so far as I know, by no church nominal of Christ. But alas ! how much of it exists ! and worse ; how much of its insidious poison, often changing its form and often its name, but never its nature, revels in our bosoms, infects our theological reasonings, and mingles with our very devotions ! Antinomianism in the church ! It is like the serpent among the flowers of Eden ; like “the man of sin” throned in “the temple of God ;” like rebellion in heaven when the monster first appeared ! Let us beware of it. It may cheat us of our crown. It is just as contrary to the gospel as it is to the law ; to the triumphs of mercy as to the claims of justice ; to Christ as to his Father. It awfully retards the process of sanctification in God’s own elect ; it endamages their piety ; it disgraces their pro-

fession ; it prevents their discernment ; it lessens their influence ; and it awfully impairs their reward. Shall I add—what I know will affect *them*—it is a most ungrateful return for the holy and unspeakable Love that died for them, “that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

2. *The proper criterion of character is the law of God.* Various indeed are the estimates of human nature as made by its constituents in this world ; and while these differ among themselves through all degrees of the scale, they generally differ more from the estimate of the bible. Why is this ? Plainly because men judge by different standards, while there is but one right standard. Their judgments would be correct comparatively, were their standards of judgment right. To surrender every false criterion, and adopt that of God, marks an important stage of the process of regeneration, from preliminary to complete. So it was with Paul. He exchanged the standard of the Pharisee for that of the Holy Ghost. And how did it revolution into truth all his erring prepossessions ! God regards his law alone in his estimate of men. No other standard will be honoured in the day of judgment. And now, my respected hearers, is this our standard ? Is our estimate of others, and especially of ourselves, governed by the law of God ? what think we then of human nature ? that *it* “is holy, just, and good ?” or that it is “evil, and only evil, and that continually,”

till the grace of the gospel, obeyed and loved, changes, cleanses, and conforms it, to the eternal excellency of the law? Hence,

3. *The necessity of approving the law, of understanding and loving it, of being cordially pleased with it, nay of delighting in it ; the necessity of this, I say, in order to the existence of piety in the soul.* There is no salvation in the gospel, for those who continue the enemies of the law. It is just as hard—if hard it will be called—to love grace as justice ; precisely as hard ! Nor is the repentance genuine, nor the faith operative, nor the humility true, nor the devotion acceptable, nor the hope authentic, of those whose evangelical piety leaves them disliking or barely tolerating the law of God.

4. *The connexion between correct views and feelings, in relation to the law of God, and doctrinal soundness in religion.* The man “that loveth or maketh a lie,” does it because he is the enemy of the law of God. Those who understand and love this law, are such lovers of truth that the total doctrine of the bible, so far as it is discovered, just suits them. Hence all their moral feelings are in favour of evidence ; in league with divine testimony ; and divorced from “the spirit of error.” Hence the lovers of the law of God pursue wisdom ; search for truth ; pray for divine guidance ; examine incessantly the scriptures ; make the necessary decisions and sacrifices ; and become habituated to the lessons of inspiration, “strength-

ened, established, settled," in "the faith once delivered to the saints."

5. *The gospel is good.* This is one of the most important lessons we can deduce from the nature and relations of the law. The law and the gospel are not the same; they are not to be confounded; they are to be compared, distinguished, and understood as things that differ: while Luther was certainly right in making a thorough and discriminating knowledge of both, a criterion, or rather the criterion, of a sound and competent theologian. But still they are mutually and vitally related; so that both are good, if either is good; and both are evil, if either is evil. The law and the gospel have a common soul of holiness; a common source of holiness; a common scope of holiness. The gospel as a system gives to the law perhaps the highest, brightest, fullest honour that it can ever receive. If the law be evil, how then can the gospel be good? If the law be good, and that superlatively, good also is "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." How absurd then and vain for us to bless ourselves with hope through the gospel, while our hearts are inimical to the law! while we dislike to hear any preaching that explains and vindicates the law! while possibly we dare to calumniate the holy and enlightened faithfulness of those preachers, who treat of the law as Apostles treated of it; and while we are not afraid to stigmatize it as legal preaching, dull morality, and a dereliction of the gospel! An antinomian preacher is an anti-evangeli-

cal preacher ; and the hearers who prefer such an one, would do well to examine again "which be the first principles of the doctrine of Christ :—" for the law and the gospel have a common moral nature.

There is treachery organized in the grace of the gospel, if there be not righteousness embodied in the structure of the law : and there is hypocrisy, or, if you will, self-deceit and vanity, in our favouring the grace of the gospel, and preferring that grace, and glorying in that grace, unless we sincerely approve, nay morally enjoy, the eternal excellency of the law of God. And if this test of character, in relation both to the law and the gospel, be appalling, it only proves our own perilous antinomianism. Among tests it is lucid and transcendent. It is a test for which we ought to be grateful ; for it is one of the best in our possession. By its faithful use, "coming to the light," we may *ascertain* if we have any piety ; we may put our hope into the light of demonstration ; we may exchange the fear that "hath torment" for the love that is "perfect ;" we may forego forever the wretched *exuvix* of our servile trepidation, for "the spirit of adoption," saying to God, *My Father, my Father*, and departing from him no more ; we may see ourselves legitimately identified with the elect of God, to whom he "gives eternal life," who shall "never perish," and whom no power is "able to pluck from his hand ;" we may with equal modesty, and truth, and infallibility, infer our eternal destination to eternal glory in the new Jerusalem ; we may expect

heaven, and prepare for it, and desire it, for we shall soon be there, exulting, soaring, triumphing, in the glory ineffable of the Redeemer: for, a lover of the law, and a truster in the gospel, is connected to God himself, by that indissoluble tie that is constituted forever by "the love of God which is in JESUS CHRIST our Lord." We may hence learn

6. *Why the gospel is ever rejected.* Does this terrible phenomenon result from the nature of the gospel; the scantiness of its provisions; the insincerity of its overtures; or the meanness of its spirit? None of these. The true reason cannot be told too plainly or repeated too often—it is just because men hate the law of God! It is this that helps their logic to its quibbles and their philosophy to its difficulties—because they are the positive enemies of righteousness! It is this that renders duty so impracticable, service so difficult, and piety so painful, that they indefinitely postpone them all! It is this that keeps them impenitent, unbelieving, and "double-minded." It is this that veils the meaning of the sacred page; renders the divine testimony ambiguous; and maintains such a standing army of doubts. It is this that builds the bowers of heresy, inspires the spirit of liberalism, and stimulates the ingenuity of excuses. It is this that generates the sirens of infidelity; gives plausibility to the arguments of error; and soothes the disobedient with the flattering unctions of hope. It is this that convinces the fanatic, establishes the corrupter, and qualifies the vender of new revelations: this

that makes folly pass for wisdom, sophistry for argument, and impiety for worship. It is this that macerates the body, sanctions austerity, begets formalism, enacts revolting penance, dreams of infallibility, and paganizes the gospel of God. It is this that constitutes the sceptic, the reviler, and the atheist. It is this that misrepresents religion as forbidding, licentiousness as manly, and responsibility as absurd. It is this alone that prevents universal faith, and piety, and blessedness—it is antipathy to the law of God! And yet this is precisely the cause that must not be assigned—because it is uncharitable, puritanical, and not to be believed! The preacher who alleges this only as the true cause, is rated as well meaning, but feeble, deficient in originality, and scarcely worth hearing: although this is the grand statement of the bible, pervading all its pages, characterizing all its preachers, and made with overpowering light by the Lord Jesus Christ himself; who said, “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” This is the reason, and in substance the only reason, why the gospel is ever rejected. The fact rests on the sober evidence of reason, observation, and scripture; and is as palpably true as the great astronomical facts of the solar system, according to Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. It requires a strange compound of ignorance, impiety, and sophistry, to doubt that those who reject the gospel “have not the love of God in them.” The deist, the

mohammedan, the jew, the heretic, and the sceptic, all in general claim to love the Creator, (if they admit his existence,) although they reject the gospel: that is, according to their own account, they are friends of righteousness, very good and virtuous, honest and excellent men, notwithstanding their rejection of "Jesus Christ and him crucified!" But what is a friend of righteousness that loves not the law of God? And is it possible to love that law and yet reject the gospel? No moral impossibility was ever greater or plainer! Look at that law; and show me the man who can intelligently believe that anything but opposition to it could consist with rejection of the gospel! Truly "the secrets of many hearts are revealed!" For one, I am not afraid to say that if I could at all believe that love of righteousness ever prompted the rejection of the gospel; nay, if I were not convinced that enmity to the law is the universal prompter of such rejection, I would not only tear my commission as a preacher—I would surrender also my hope as a christian; and in the indignant spirit of a man, I would deny all religion, and even the existence of its eternal Author! I ought rather to say—I cannot imagine what I should do, in a predicament that could not occur without a total revolution of all that we know, or feel, or hope, as creatures of rational existence. This argument will be very entertaining in the day of judgment; for then it will be managed precisely as it ought to be; and its disclosures will instruct and astonish the concourse of immortals.

God is adequate to its full elucidation ; and he will lecture us convincingly. May none of you, my hearers, evade conviction till that day ! In anticipation of its scenes, I affectionately beseech you, to trust Jehovah now ! There is no venture in the homage. You will lose nothing, jeopard nothing, injure nothing, by rendering to God the confidence of your total minds, and participating here the holy triumphs of his people in the prospective and eternal vindication of his often dishonoured name ! And lastly, we learn

7. *The authenticity of hope in the gospel alone ; as demonstrated from the impossibility of authentic hope on the basis of the law.* To sinners, such as the law shows that we are, the gospel alone ministers grace, peace, and hope. And to the gospel alone, as the medium of hope, cling the spirits of all who are lovers of the law ; while, conversely, the enemies of the gospel hope—if they hope at all—on principles of law : they hope where christians despair, and despair where christians hope. Here is the grand paradox of religion ; that they alone who love the law for duty, alone abandon it for hope ; that those alone whose hope is valid, acknowledge their ill-desert, and resort to the atmosphere of grace in order to breathe the breath of spiritual life ; that those alone who have virtue, abandon their own goodness as the ground of hope, “being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” To effect a spiritual divorce from the law as the basis of hope, and to inspire

hope on the principles of the gospel alone, is the great object of conversion. Thus, in relation to the law of marriage, does the Apostle illustrate the change, in the first four verses of this chapter. "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?"—or, as unquestionably it ought to be rendered, "as long as it (the law) liveth." By a splendid personification he speaks of the law, as our natural or first husband; whom, according to the law of marriage, it were wrong to abandon in his life-time: for then he could protect, and cherish, and ennoble us; and then our obligations, and "the covenant of our God" upon us, exclude all other suitors, and bind our affections, duties, and services, absolutely to him alone. But, he argues, if our husband is dead, our obligations are cancelled; and we are at liberty to contract a second marriage with one who is immortal and life-giving forever. Now, the law, as the Bridegroom of souls, is in effect dead; and so can be our husband no longer. From him there is no hope. No matter what killed him; in whatever way accomplished, the results are the same: and though sin was his murderer, and that sin our own, yet he is dead; and the deed is not only irrevocable—it is an instance of death without any resurrection, the slumbers of which are profound and interminable. And what is the inference? Why, that we may cease our mourning, burn our weeds of wo, and end our widowhood—otherwise

shrouded in infinite despair ! Here is hope, and only here. An other lover, and he incomparably preferable, "the Prince of life," offers us his heart and his hand, in honourable and eternal espousals. To him we may be legitimately "married ;" never to be divorced, never separated even by death, never upbraided by conscience or truth or goodness. His resources are infinite, suited to our condition, and devoted to our weal. We accredit his affection, accept his proposals, and consummate eternal union before the witnessing earth and the conscious heavens ! "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Of this marriage, my brethren, literal marriage was from the beginning the instituted type. To illustrate this was one of the formal ends intended to be answered by the existence of the relation : and to celebrate this grandest relation of man, and most gracious relation of God, will be one of the desired occupations of the assembly of the glorified forever. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of

them that are saved shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they that are written in the Lamb's book of life." Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY, OR MAN A FALLEN BEING.

ROM. v. 20.—“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

THE fall of man, the basis of christian doctrine, was brought about, as scripture relates, by the seductive artifice of an evil spirit, who, under the form of a serpent, enticed the mother of the race to eat the forbidden fruit. She persuaded her husband to commit the same trespass, and thus they lost their innocence, exchanged their Maker's likeness for that of their seducer, and became obnoxious to the threatened penalty of death. And had that penalty to its utmost extent been instantly inflicted upon them, what cause had God's violated justice given for wonder or censure? But we read in scripture of a Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world, and of grace given us in Christ *before the*

world began. God was seized with no surprize when He found Adam taken in the tempter's snare ; He foresaw his fall before He created him ; and had He not had a gracious purpose concerning him, which his fall could not frustrate, He who does nothing in vain would doubtless have spared Himself that glorious effort of power and love, which gave being to man, and to such a world as this for his habitation. In foresight of the deed, God from eternity designed that the trespass of Adam, instead of being visited by a stroke which would have instantly ended his earthly existence and precluded that of his race, should be the occasion of introducing a scheme of mercy whose developments and results were to form the grand materials of time's diversified history, and of eternity's joy and praise. That scheme accordingly was then introduced : and hence it was that Adam, after his sentence was pronounced, did not find himself in that condition of hopeless horror to which he otherwise would have been reduced by the plenary execution of his Maker's threat. The sentence on the fallen pair involved many evils, but they were not unmingled with blessings. If the earth's increase was to be no longer spontaneous, yet it was possible to be secured by labour ; and if sorrow was to be the precursor of a posterity, it was to be more than compensated by joy thence to arise : for though that posterity was still to encounter the tempter's subtlety, and hence to sustain partial damage, yet the announcement that the seed of the woman should avenge her

wrong, by bruising the serpent's head, intimated the ultimate triumph of human nature, and faintly shadowed forth that life and immortality, that amazing exaltation of mankind in an eternal state, to secure which to the faithful, was the end of Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Here then it was—here, between the descending arm of justice and the person of rebellious man, that the grace of God which reigneth through righteousness, first intervened and appeared. Here was the first disclosure of that mighty provision of eternal wisdom and love, the economy concerning which embraces the whole of revealed religion. And what deserves the deepest regard of all thinking men who would not be found, in their reasonings at least, among the enemies of that religion, this gracious provision of the gospel, even in this earliest revelation of it, contemplated not fallen Adam, but fallen man. God told the serpent that he would put enmity, not only between him and the woman, but also between his seed and her seed; and it was the woman's posterity, most eminently but not exclusively, in Christ, that was to have the triumph over that malignant adversary. All subsequent exhibitions of this provision present it as having the same universal reference and applicableness to the race. Who that believes the gospel can doubt that the redemption which is in Christ was designed for no one generation, age, or nation of men, but for the human

kind, through all generations, ages, and nations, till time should be no longer? Why was the gospel to be preached to every creature, through all coming times, till the end of the world? Why must one generation teach it to another, we to our children, they to theirs, and so on till men shall cease to be born? Manifestly the provision of the gospel, first disclosed in Eden on the day when Adam fell, looked to the consummation of all things, and regarded every descendant of Adam as needing its grace no less than Adam himself. Now it is unquestionable, that, in thus adapting itself to all the unborn offspring of Adam, the gospel provision assumed that mankind were in the divine view as really fallen and sinful as their progenitor. Though not yet in being, they were in their Maker's sight a depraved and perishing race, needing His mercy as much as did their first father when he stood before Him; the trembling expectant of the stroke of death. For otherwise how unsuitable had the provision of the gospel (a provision only for *ruined sinners*) been for them!

Before I advance to the immediate object of this discourse, which embraces A STATEMENT AND DEFENCE OF THE DIVINE CONSTITUTION IN THIS PARTICULAR, let me bring the fact into distinct notice, that the moral history of mankind, as far back as it can be traced, is the history of a race of sinners. No reasoning will be held with him who would bring this fact into controversy. Judging mankind by the lowest standard of

virtue any where or at any time received, a sentence of condemnation must go forth against them. Men who having not the law are a law unto themselves, have brought in decisive verdicts against one another. The feeble sense of right and wrong, which the light of nature aided by traditional revelation, kept alive in their hearts, has been sufficient to ascertain and condemn their wickedness, its proofs having always been so flagrant. That they have received the christian doctrine of original depravity in its full latitude, is not affirmed ; but many explicit testimonies, besides their fiction of a golden age, assure us that they have not been of the opinion that the primitive and the present states of mankind are the same. It is remarked by one of their own poets, that no man is born without the seeds of moral evil, and that the best man is he who has the fewest ; and if the glimmering ray of nature could produce conviction of that truth, how lively should be our sense of it, under the teachings of inspiration. How the scripture testifies to the wickedness of mankind, discerning pure wickedness in every moral action of unrenewed man, without a solitary exception since the fall, no well instructed person can be supposed ignorant. Nor is it possible that a mind duly enlightened into the nature of the law of God should dissent from the testimony of scripture, after comparing human conduct with that infallible standard.

Now here is a fact, the evidence of which is inwrought into the moral feelings and conduct of every

living man, and fills the records of all past time; it is a fact plain and certain as that we have a real existence—that mankind, universally and from the beginning of moral life, are a race of sinners; and if reason now considers it a disowning of her empire to make facts give way to one's clashing preconceptions, let us take heed lest we incur the reproach of absurdity by pursuing that exploded course in regard to the present subject.

Previous to all inquiry into the ground or occasion of this universal depravation of our race, it is surely a welcome recollection to every mind susceptible of pious gratitude, that God, foreseeing that it would be so with Adam's descendants, disclosed in Eden a scheme of mercy, not designed for Adam only, but for all his unborn sons and daughters, who, in point of fact, would need it, every one as much as their fallen sire. For why should a knowledge *of the reason* of this fact be deemed indispensable to the acceptance of that gracious scheme? Finding ourselves most fearfully enthralled, shall we wait to discover exactly how our thralldom befel us, before we can be willing to avail ourselves of an escape from it? If a man would not wait in his bed, amidst flames, because he knew not the cause of his peril, when a door was open before him, through which he might fly and be safe—if a drowning man would not delay to seize a hand kindly stretched out for his rescue, until he had ascertained how he came to be drowning; no more need miserable men wait to know

how they should all have become sinners ; persisting in rebellion against their Maker, who reaches down an arm to them out of heaven, by laying hold on which they may be delivered from all evil.

But to those who, having availed themselves of Heaven's proffered help, are rescued from the frightful abyss in which the ungodly world are perishing, it is not unlawful to institute the inquiry to which we have referred, nor to such persons will the inquiry be unsuccessful or difficult. The language of scripture on this subject is explicit. St. Paul accounts for man's universal degeneracy in this manner : When God placed Adam in paradise, under trial, as certified by Moses, having determined that he should have a posterity, determined further that his trial should decide what would be the original moral character and state of all his descendants : whence it resulted that Adam having fallen, the trespass which cast him from his first estate involved in the train of its consequences that degradation and death to which we are all subjected. And if events may be taken as interpreters of God's sentence against Adam, it was a sentence as much against his race as against him. They, like him, have to till an accursed soil, and to procure their bread by the sweat of their face. Like him, they return to the dust, after having experienced similar sorrows and trials. And finally, as Adam, when he became a sinner, became obnoxious to a sentence which, if executed, would have sunk him to endless wo, so his posterity being born in sin, are by nature children of wrath, and

subject to the same sentence of terrible condemnation : such resemblances do exist between the sire and his offspring, and scripture accounts for them in the manner before stated.

The passage of scripture which contains this account was read at the beginning.* Not to enter largely into the consideration of this passage, let me now just call your attention to the single point in which every sentence and syllable of it meets, namely, that there was such a connexion between Adam and all mankind, that his violation of the sacred tree determined what should be their character and condition no less than his own. What mean the following expressions if not this at least, that there was such a connexion between Adam and his posterity ? “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.” “If through the offence of one many be dead.” “The judgment was by one to condemnation.” “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” In what terms could the idea be more perfectly expressed that Adam’s first sin was not in its consequences limited to himself, but reached to the remotest generations of his descendants ? These expressions do not to my mind explain the theory of the connexion between Adam’s sin and the ruin of his posterity ; but no language could more clearly assert the connexion. Of the philosophy of this

* Rom. v. 12—21.

matter, whether they who speak with great confidence, speak with equal wisdom or convincingness, is questioned. The particles *by* and *through* here used by the apostle, ascertain the fact that we become sinful through Adam's disobedience; but that any doctrine *as to mode* is clearly involved in these particulars, or is elsewhere taught in scripture as the certain and sole truth on this subject, let another tongue than mine declare.

And now in proceeding to the defence of the divine arrangement in this high case, as above set forth, it may be useful to premise, that the course of things here as far at least as it relates to observable facts, was but analogous to what has been the general course of things among mankind ever since. That there was no peculiarity in the *manner* in which Adam's trespass transmitted its influences of depravity and death, is by no means affirmed; but the *fact* of transgression ought not to surprise us. How little sin is committed in this world, that affects none but its author? Have not entire nations been depraved and ruined by the iniquity of one man? Does not one generation of men give character and destiny to generations that follow? Who has not seen the dark print of a parent's misdeed on the front of his children? When the intemperate man lifts the bowl to his own lips, he puts it also, in effect, into the hands of his family. When the murderer executes his fell purpose, does he not bring a stain upon his household which years cannot

efface? And may I not refer you to yourselves for illustrations of our principle? Have none of you suffered from the want of virtue or piety in your parents? And are not your children suffering, and will they not yet suffer, from the same cause in yourselves? When you use profane speech, or break the sabbath, or indulge your angry passions, or neglect the family altar, these offences, so far from terminating in yourselves, have already perhaps made a ruinous invasion upon the souls of your offspring, and may be working them harm when you are mouldering in your grave. Assuredly we are no strangers to other exemplifications of the far-reaching, deadly tendencies of sin, besides that of the first sin of Adam. All sin violates relations, and so passes over to those who, by those relations, are connected to its author; and working through them, may spread havoc in every course, and over an unmeasurable tract, and may be multiplying its mischiefs through all time and eternity. And I cannot forbear the remark that the impression which we should take from this tremendous truth, as illustrated in that most signal of all instances, the first sin of Adam, is any thing rather than a railing or a contentious disposition. The moral history of our world, the actual moral state of man, demands of us rather that we fall down in view of it, before the mercy seat of God, crying with deep humility and sorrow for his infinite pity. He would but show madness who should insist that there was no sun in the heavens, and no creatures on the earth; but that

there is a sun, and that there are creatures who rejoice under his cheering rays, is not at all more certain than that sin and death have their seat in every family and every breast on this globe: and when the scripture, which alone gives any probable account of this fact, refers it to the sin of Adam in touching the forbidden fruit, what we see, what we hear, what we feel, what we know must soon come to pass in respect to each of us, should restrain murmuring, and overwhelm us with the power of this one sentiment, that it is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing to sin against God. What avails it to indulge an unsubmissive temper towards this awful subject? Can you by this means cure the bad propensities of your heart, and array yourself in the loveliness of a sinless character? Or can you raise thus such a rampart about your person, family, or property, that no afflictive visitation of Providence shall ever more annoy you? Or extract that poison from your frame which is now working its dissolution? Or disarm conscience of her compunctious sting? Or quench the fires of perdition? How raving and pitiable were the conduct of a condemned culprit, who, chained in a dungeon till the appointed day of death, should pass the time in uttering imprecations against the builder of his prison, and the court that sentenced him.

Nor is the mere impotence and inutility of such a spirit the only ground of its condemnation. It is on other accounts an unreasonable and guilty spirit; as the sequel of this discourse will perhaps more fully

disclose. But if nothing more could be said on our Maker's behalf, than that He has given us no cause of complaint, we should lay our hand upon our mouth before him, whatever were the doom that awaited us. And that God has not done this, the perfection of His nature is higher reason for believing, than any conceivable evidence could be, for believing the contrary. Let God be justified when He speaketh, and clear when He judgeth, though all men and angels should have spoken and judged differently. But does the judgment of God stand alone in this case? That judgment is against sin; and sin reigns over man; and ought not man to accept the punishment of his iniquity? There is really an evil in sin; something which ought not to be; something which deserves blame. Sin, on every hypothesis as to its origin in the universe, is, in its own nature, wrong and inexcusable. He who commits it, does wrong, acts unlawfully; and we ourselves, polluted and lost to virtue as we are, cannot avoid some consciousness of its evil nature. How then must it appear to that Eye which discerns impurity in the stars? Shall God be less the enemy of sin than the human conscience? Shall He not be opposed to it in its germ and seeds, and manifest the brightness of His purity, by passing against its authors a sentence of terrible condemnation? Does it not magnify the excellency of God, that foreseeing we would all be sinners from the womb, He expressed beforehand His abhorrence of our race by a condemnatory judgment?

But still the inquiry presses itself on our thoughts, and we cannot avoid it, nor should we—why did a Being of infinite benevolence and wisdom suffer a race of creatures to arise, under such a constitution, that they would invariably and universally abuse their powers and incur His displeasure? And while it is certain that there is nothing in this constitution, of which they have reason to complain, and that no imputation had rested on God's *justice*, if here had ended His dealings towards man, and we had all been left under hopeless condemnation; I cannot say that such a termination of things would, to my apprehension, have been consistent with the *whole character* ascribed to God, by both revelation and reason. I can read God's infinite abhorrence of sin, and love of righteousness, in this part of his plan; but unless I extend my view further, I can see no trace of infinite benevolence or wisdom: and since the expression of His hatred of sin is in the sufferings of creatures, in which He avers upon His oath that He has no delight, it seems unlawful to suppose that He would have entered upon a course of measures, which had their sufferings as its ultimate end. While therefore we justify this righteous doing of the Lord, confessing that He has done what became Him, we must by no means regard this as an isolated, disconnected proceeding, terminating in itself; but rather as part of a glorious system of measures, worthy of the whole perfection of the Deity. However *just* it would have been to have left Adam's posterity, with himself, hopelessly involved in the consequences of

his lapse, is it supposable that it would have become the *entire glory* of the Divine Being, to have formed the earth and created man upon it, and permitted the race to be ruined so shortly after creation's birth, *if their ruin had been the last end of His scheme of operations?* Would not His boundless benevolence, foreseeing as He did the end from the beginning, have inclined Him, not to create, but to abstain from creating, a world, if here had been the limit and final result of His plan? Is it not, therefore, a most unrighteous thing, thus to judge of God's character, by one act of His government, considered without reference either to antecedent or subsequent measures? What architect would not deem himself wronged, if his ingenuity and skill should be estimated from a detached part of a most complicated and profound piece of workmanship? In this way of judging, things are apt to be pronounced against, which, considered in their relations to other things, evince the deepest penetration and wisdom. And shall we adopt this mode of judging, in regard to the ways of the Almighty? When He began his operations, He had a scheme of action before Him, too extended and vast to be comprehended by any other mind than His own. On the fulfilment of that entire scheme, not of any one single part of it, does He depend, so to speak, for the discovery of His perfection. The scripture, reminding us that we now know only in part, counsels us to judge nothing before the time, but wait till the mystery of God be finished. The precipitancy,

which, in opposition to this advice, not only refuses to wait, but will not take into view the whole of what has been done—which grounds a sentence of condemnation on one detached measure, a measure which would never have been entered upon, but for the sake of what was and is to follow—such rashness it is, that leads men to raise their objections to the providence and ways of God : of which a thousand exemplifications might be mentioned, but none more unequivocal than that connected with our present subject.

For when God so ordered things that Adam's disobedience should be the occasion of his posterity's disobedience and condemnation also, did he there stay his ordering hand? Was nothing done toward mankind but just to condemn them? Then God had shown indeed his *severity*, but the glory of his *goodness* had not appeared. But find we nothing else revealed in the scriptures concerning this subject? Have we not read that the second Adam appeared to undo the mischief perpetrated by the first; that the Son of man came to destroy the works of the devil; that his errand into this world who travailed and prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, was to counteract the evils let into the same world by that man's disobedience who dwelt in the garden of Eden? Nay, not only was the second Adam a restorer of that which the first took away, but scripture has clearly sounded in our ear the most joyful intelligence, that he bestows inconceivably more than was lost. What music of heaven would be

sweeter to us than these inspired testimonies of the Apostle? "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."* "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Here is restoration: the scales are now in equipoise, but they do not remain so; that scale goes down which contains the blessings brought in by Christ. "For if through the offence of one many be dead, *much more* the grace of God, and the gift by grace which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Have those who complain that mankind are brought into being under a hard and undesirable constitution, duly considered this divine comparison between what was done against us by the first Adam and what has been done for us by the second? or is my own mind bewildered with an unwarranted joy, while, with this

* Calvin's comment on this text: "Communem omnium gratiam facit quia omnibus exposita est, non quod ad omnes extendatur, re ipsa: Nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi, atque omnibus indifferenter Dei benignitate, offertur, non tamen omnes apprehendent." He makes this the common grace of all, because it is set before all, not that all are in fact put in possession of it. For though Christ died for the sins of the whole world, and he is by the mercy of God offered alike to all, yet all do not embrace him." Calvin expresses the same views on this subject in his comments on Mat. xxvi. 8. 1 Cor. viii. 11, 12. 1 John ii. 2. 2 Pet. ii. 1. and Jude 4.

comparison in my view, I praise my Maker that He has given me existence under a constitution which His word assures me is not only equal in advantages, but greatly preferable to that which was violated by Adam? What if *sin* has abounded in consequence of that violation; since *grace* has not only equally, but *much more* abounded? What if sin has reigned over us *unto death*; since grace, unless we prove incorrigibly rebellious, shall also reign over us unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord? Disadvantages there are under the present constitution; but they are more than counter-balanced (how much more who can estimate?) by its advantages.

So speaks inspiration to him who has an ear to hear; and joyous are the feelings which that sweet voice hath awakened in many a breast, once agitated with various guilty objections to the goodness of the divine conduct towards man, after the fall of Adam. Confining their thought to that part of the present constitution which ascertains that all mankind will commence sinners as soon as they commence moral existence; regarding very heedfully the ills and disadvantages consequent to the race, upon their progenitor's crime; but not taking into their view that bright and blissful scene of superabounding grace, which but for those disadvantages could never have been spread out before the eye of creatures—as the beauties of a landscape could never have arisen into view under the artist's pencil, but by means of the shading—committing this inexcusable error,

they could barely submit to that which afterwards, when better understood, commanded their affectionate wonder and most ardent praise.

Though it belongs not to sinful lips to add one substantial truth to what the Holy Spirit has delivered on this subject, yet may we not have liberty to dilate a little some of those things which He has presented to us in a condensed, brief form, on purpose, it would seem, that we might have reason and encouragement to employ our own meditations upon them?

Such then is the constitution under which we receive rational existence, that the first exercise of our faculties is sinful, and a consciousness of guilt, more or less distinct, pervades the whole of our conscious life-time, and the original disorder of our natures growing worse the longer it remains, we are liable to the most sad enthrallment of sin—the dominion of vicious propensities, raging passions, confirmed bad habits, and ungodly customs. But though God surely is not answerable for these deplorable perversions of His workmanship, yet has He made an all-sufficient provision against them; and over our great wickedness how gloriously triumphant is His sovereign goodness? The constitution we are born under, ascertains our universal sinfulness; but does it not also present to us the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, whose blood cleanseth from sin, and from access to whose sin-atoning blood, God restrains no creature under heaven? And does it not also instruct us how

the Spirit of God doth strive with man, and propose to enter and occupy every willing heart? Breathes there a child of Adam, however unworthy and guilty, unto whom the High and Lofty One doth not wait to be gracious?

And let it be borne in mind, that it is not merely the recovery of man from the guilt and pollution of sin that God aims to effect under this part of His constitution. It is not to reinstate us into Adam's primitive condition, and establish us under the constitution from which he fell—this is not what the second Adam came to do for the apostate offspring of the first; but something as far higher as heaven is higher than the earth. We know not with certainty what would have been our state if the trespass of Eden had not been committed. Adam and Eve, while holy, were doubtless strangers to unhappiness, and had free access to all the sources of joy that an earthly paradise could afford; and it is presumable that had they never sinned they would never have been in less desirable circumstances. That their circumstances would have been better, we know not. Scripture is quite silent as to what would have been their ultimate condition; and equally silent in regard to what, in that case, would have been the ultimate condition of their posterity. This however we may boldly say, that their prospects of bliss were not brighter than those of their progenitors: Their expectation could not, on the ground of any promise revealed

to us, have extended beyond the delights and felicities of the garden of Eden.

But what were these compared to that life and immortality, that undefiled and incorruptible inheritance that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is held out to mankind by the constitution they live under? Adam dwelt on a beautiful spot of earth, where grew every tree that was good for food and pleasant to the sight, and a river running through it kept it ever fresh and fertile: But we may have our dwelling in a paradise above the sky, and drink of the river of the water of life which proceedeth from the throne of God and the Lamb. Adam had communion with God, and perhaps occasional visits of angels; but we may become angels' equals and companions, may have angels for our servants; nay more, be associated, united, and in a manner identified, with the Lord of angels. For let us not forget that the Son of God has already taken our nature into union with His own; that humanity is now sitting upon the throne of heaven; that true believers are so nearly related to Christ that they are called *His body*; that they are to be with Christ where He is; that they are all to be one, as the Father is in Christ, and Christ in the Father, so they also are to be one in Them; that they are to share the glory which the Father hath given to the Son; to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and to reign forever and ever. Such is the blessedness which God tenders to mankind under the present constitution;

compared to which, that which Adam had, or had reason to expect, deserves no remembrance.—Nor is it on any hard condition that this blessedness is promised; not on the condition of sinless obedience, but simple faith in Christ. Faith, as a grain of mustard seed, expressed in one sincere petition, will have nothing less than all this blessedness for its reward. For that faith once exercised, God becomes gracious to its subject, imputes not his sins, leaves him not in temptation, works in him holy affections, and keeps him by his power through faith unto salvation: Easier or more generous terms could not have been prescribed: to dispense with or diminish ought from these terms, were to patronise sin.

And as to the unavoidable evils which take place under the present constitution, we may easily reconcile ourselves to these, by duly attending to the two following considerations. In the first place, all these natural evils are as nothing compared to the natural good which God bestows. I make this assertion, not forgetting that customary declamation represents the earth as though it brought forth thorns and thistles, and very little else—that it fills the world with groans and tears, leaving little or no room for different sorts of things. But however tolerable such discourse may be, taken as rhetorical hyperbole, nothing is more unjust, considered in the light of sober statement. No account is to be taken of the self-inflicted miseries of mankind; for God surely is not to be blamed for evils which men bring

upon themselves by indulging their passions and appetites, in contempt of His authority, in perversion of His order, and in wanton abuse of His goodness. We are to consider only such evils as are inevitably incidental to our state, as appointed to us by the will of God; and in this view we affirm that the good of it immensely surpasses the evil. There are fewer thorns and thistles in this world, than fruit-trees, and fields of golden wheat, and luxuriant vineyards and olive yards and gardens—not less proofs of the divine goodness because the product, in a sense, of the industry of man. And in the world of animal life there are, perhaps, a thousand feelings of delight, where is one of pain. “The air, the earth, the water,” it has been truly said, “teem with delighted existence. In a spring noon, or a summer evening, on whichever side I turn my eyes, myriads of happy beings crowd upon my view. ‘The insect youth are on the wing.’ Swarms of new born flies are trying their powers in the air. Their sportive motions, their wanton mazes, their gratuitous activity, their continual change of place without use or purpose, testify the joy and the exultation which they feel in their newly discovered faculties.” The larger animals also, as they sing among the branches, or soar toward heaven, or feed together and rejoice in their common pasture, have great seeming delight in existence. And as to the human family, sinful as we are, when we compare our years of health and enjoyment with our days of pain and sickness, must we judge that there is

little else but wretchedness in the physical life of man? And what if death stand in the rear of all our gratifications? Death to the inferior creatures is but the pang of a moment; and if it be any thing more to us—nay, if it be not the crown of our temporal blessings, the brightest event in our earthly existence, the fault is a voluntary one of our own: For the constitution we are under brings within our reach an antidote of death; presents the monster without his sting; nay, changed into an angel of peace—a convoy and guide to heaven.

But there is another view to be taken of these natural evils, in which they appear matter of thankfulness. If the present were the only life given us to expect under the existing constitution, even then these evils were not without concomitant or consequent advantages: For sickness sometimes issues in better health than it displaces; and the loss of property often calls faculties into exercise, which would otherwise have been unemployed; and the best specimens of excellence among men, are formed by resisting difficulties, braving dangers, and practising self-denial. But the consideration of that future state, to which the present is but introductory, makes it still easier to bear these evils: For it gives them the aspect of so many tutors and governors, employed to train us up for the occupations and honours of a kingdom in the heavens. And it puts on them no deceitful appearance. They are in fact such governors and tutors, but for which, few if any of the human kind would have entered into eternity pre-

pared for its happiness. It is affliction which prevents us from confining our views and hopes to the earth, and wings our spirits with ardent desires and aspirations for the mansions of rest. It is affliction which furnishes occasions for high instances of virtue, and thus enables us to win a brighter crown of everlasting joy. Those saints whom the prophet of Patmos beheld in vision with so much admiration, had not been so pre-eminently distinguished in heaven, if they had not ascended thither out of great tribulation. Myriads upon myriads now shining above the brightness of the firmament, had not poured around them such effulgence of glory, if they had been exempt from the natural evils which befell them in this life.

This therefore is the just conclusion in respect to these evils; that while in quantity they are almost as nothing compared to the natural good which we enjoy, they are, unless it be otherwise by our own wilfulness, attended with advantages which call for our adoring gratitude and praise.

Of the things which have been spoken, the sum is this; that while the constitution under which it has pleased the Almighty Sovereign of the Universe to bring the posterity of Adam into being, assuming the certainty of their depravation and ruin in consequence of his disobedience, though by no means attractive regarded in itself, is liable to no just censure; we ought never to limit our view to this part of the divine plan, which had never been determined on, but as

introductory to another scheme of things, vastly more evincive of goodness and grace, than the former of severity and wrath.—Nor is it an objection to what we have advanced on this subject, that so large a portion of mankind, after all, perish in idolatry and unbelief. Heathenism and the wickedness of christian nations proceed from the same original cause, the rejection of God's truth and grace.* And shall the madness of human depravity make the grace of God of none effect?

And now this doctrine is not more evidently true than its inculcation is important. The human mind can have no worthy sentiments and feelings toward God, without just and worthy thoughts of his character and ways. Such thoughts are natively incongenial to its spirit, which is enmity against God, and must of course, and without the influence of any adverse cause extraneous to the mind itself, be very unlikely to find free entrance into it. Especially is this true in relation to our subject. Here, doubtless more than on any other point, does man maintain proud controversy with his Maker; cherishing most injurious feeling, if not venting it in open and impious complaints. Whether those who have undertaken to vindicate the divine conduct in this matter; have not, by assuming untenable positions, and principally by not fully unfolding the divine conduct itself, contributed rather to promote than end the contro-

* John i. 5. and iii. 19. Rom. i. 21; 28.

versy, I shall not consider ; but sure I am, that if that conduct, as exhibited in scripture, be righteously judged of, all men must see that God, so far from having given them cause for the slightest disaffection, has afforded them matter for higher praises than He ever has the holy angels, “ that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” While it was no way incumbent on God to shut the door opened by Adam to the letting in of sin and death upon himself and his race ; while if ruin had rushed in through that door so criminally opened, and its tide had continued to roll on forever, unrestrained and undiminished, it were vast iniquity to cast upon God the blame of such a perversion of the good order he had established ; His having provided a remedy for the infinite mischief, and commenced a new economy, adapted to man’s altered state and circumstances, and terminating in such an elevation of our nature as the gospel ensures to the penitent believer ; and this at an expense to Himself compared to which the sacrifice of worlds had been less than nothing ;—manifests goodness in God of a length and a breadth, a depth and a height, of which no understanding less capacious than His own can embrace an adequate conception : Heaven will be held in everlasting wonder ; and it will constitute the chief reproach and torment of the damned, that they have rebelled against a Being of so wondrous a love. And if men on earth could be led to look thus at the subject—if they would take but a glance at it in this light, how would their hearts smite them for their

censures of their Maker, and turn their indignation against themselves. But can such feelings be awakened in the soul by considering merely that part of the divine conduct which connected our fall with the fall of Adam? or by regarding this step of God's providence as separate from, and unrelated to the scheme of stupendous mercy to which it was in fact introductory? If, indeed, men would take a just impression from that doing of Providence, even so considered, they would find no fault with it, as far as God's agency in it was concerned. Conscious of personal depravity, which in its own nature is inexcusable, they would condemn themselves, and justify their Maker. But they would not be so affected, either with self-abhorrence or a sense of the glory of the divine nature, as when they feel the power of a just exhibition of the entire conduct of God in this case. No; God would seem to them just and holy, but yet awfully severe; and that view of Him would but produce, in minds already darkened and perverted by sin, the madness of hatred and rebellion. But how could *such minds* be made to receive a just impression of what is so terrible in its bearing on themselves? Minds unperverted and pure might judge of it fairly; but were it not a desperate task to undertake to prevent depraved beings, and beings so concerned in the matter, from conceiving hard and malignant thoughts? And were it less *unrighteous* than hopeless, to endeavour *by this means* to slay the enmity of the unrenewed heart? Why should we assail this adversary

with such a weapon ? . It is not the sword of the Spirit ; it is not the whole counsel of God. It is misrepresenting God to mankind, thus partially to declare His constitution over them. It is doing Him wrong. Here especially does it behoove us to tell, not only the truth, but the whole truth ; showing the goodness as well as severity of God. Blend these two rays together, and converge them, in one beam of pure white light, upon the human conscience and heart ; and then, if ever, man becomes a contrite penitent, and loves and adores his glorious Maker. Under that influence, directed and blessed by the Holy Spirit, the work of humiliation is perfected : the mind escapes from the blinding and deceptible power of sin ; all excuses for depravity are absorbed in a sense of its intrinsic turpitude and bitterness ; the blameworthiness of sin is seen to be irrespective of the manner of its origin ; all fallacies are detected ; all delusions are dispelled ; and the spirit of repentance sits ascendant in the heart over nature's rebelliousness and strife, and diffuses tenderness, humility, and peace, through every thought and every feeling. Such is the result, because God now is not judged of by the hearing of the ear, by partial and erroneous statements, but is seen, as with the eye, in the light of a just and faithful manifestation.

It remains only to consider our personal concern in the truth which has been declared. It is characteristic of our race to contend against God, chiefly in respect to the constitution under which He has placed us. To

contend against Him at all, is to exemplify that desperation of wickedness, with which we are so unwilling to confess ourselves chargeable: for what is wickedness, if it be not opposing infinite excellence? How does a good man feel, after emerging, like the Psalmist, from the hell of such contention? *So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.* What riches of forbearance in God, to spare the creature's life who rises up against Him! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, but wo to him that striveth with his Maker! Let God do what He may, man should be dumb, and open not his mouth, just because God hath done it. But to find fault with His conduct, in a particular wherein his goodness cannot be duly celebrated, even by the praises of eternity; to make this, above all other things, the matter of our complaint; ought we not to be ashamed and confounded at the recollection that we have been guilty of such madness?—And, my brethren, we are involved in this guilt, to a greater extent than at first thought may appear. Every sin we commit carries this guilt in its nature. We are not sooner born, than we are met by the provision against our depravity and ruin, which God's boundless mercy hath made for the fallen race. All its advantages of superabounding grace are at hand the instant they are needed, and a life of sin is but one perpetual rejection of these infinite advantages. Each separate sin expresses new contempt of them. This is the grand condemnation of mankind. Having destroyed

themselves, they reproach the High and Holy One with the blame of their destruction ; while He stretches out the hand of deliverance to them all the day long, and strives with them by His Spirit to conquer their aversion to His character and kingdom.

Such is man—self-justifying, God-accusing man. I that speak this am a man myself, and am aware that I pronounce my own shame. But I stand here to bear witness to the truth ; and would that I had a voice which could distinctly and convincingly sound out this truth to every creature under heaven, who hath an ear to hear. It is a truth, of which all will be one day convinced. The period of contradiction and gainsaying is approaching, when every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world confess themselves guilty before God. O that I could give one solemn warning of that fast-coming period, to every living man. But it is only to you that my voice can cry. Think me not an enemy, because I tell you the truth. I bring against you the charge of desperate wickedness in the sight of God. This message God has put into my mouth, and commanded me to deliver to every soul that hears me this day. It is the accusation of God Himself. Plead guilty to it, and with lowly and sincere cries for mercy, cast yourselves down at the feet of your Almighty Sovereign and Judge ; and there is hope concerning you, for there is forgiveness with Him. Show resentment or indifference at the accusation, and I will presently tell you the result.

Plead guilty, but not with a faltering tongue, or with an unconvinced, unhumbled, unbroken spirit. If you do not feel yourselves guilty, to confess yourselves so is but to mock Him who knows your heart. And what can hinder a sense of guilt? Are there no witnesses against you? Cannot memory gather round you a host of witnesses? Let me awaken memory by two or three questions. Can you count the number of the secret murmurs against God, by which you have impeached the goodness of His character and the rectitude of His government, as really as open and formal accusations would have done? Has there been no complaining, no profaneness in your tongue? But if no hidden feeling of rebellion has polluted your breast, and no expression of enmity escaped your lips—unlikely supposition—yet let me ask once more, what manner of life have you pursued? Worldliness, sensuality, ambition, forgetfulness of God, deadness to the glory and love of Christ, neglect of the soul, bible slighted, sabbath-profanations, conscience defiled, convictions stifled, the Spirit quenched—come up, ye various forms of wickedness, come ye up out of the forgotten past, and stand in order before the face of these hard-hearted men. Behold, my hearers, how many they are that witness against you. The multitude is innumerable. And what do they prove concerning you? That you are rebels, against the law which Adam violated?—no: not breakers of the covenant of innocence and justice, but breakers, despisers, renouncers all your lifetime, from

the first dawn of intelligence until now—renouncers of the covenant of the exceeding riches of the grace of God. Have you still no sense of sin? Then hear one word more. The constitution of grace, which now suffers you to go at large, carrying ever about with you your hardness and impenitency of heart, is not, as now administered, God's rule of judgment for eternity. Another order of things will one day be established. A day is now in God's view, and will soon pour its amazing light on the eyes of all, both quick and dead, called in scripture, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is the day for setting up the third and last form of the divine administration. Then will begin an economy which will never end, and never change. That portion of mankind who then shall be found to have submitted to God's rule now in force, shall inherit the blessedness of which mention has been made in this discourse. But now let me declare the inheritance of the hard-hearted. The infinite grace which they now pervert and abuse, will turn their accuser, and God will make inquisition for every indignity, which, in thought, word, or deed, they shall have committed against it. He will show himself as great in majesty and righteousness, as he now appears in mercy. And as once a world perished by the waters of a flood, so the entire multitude of the wicked, angels and men, shall then be doomed to everlasting fire, and the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE NECESSITY OF ATONEMENT.

HEBREWS ix. 22.—“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

REMISSION of sins stands connected, in the holy scriptures, with the shedding of the blood of Jesus, as the atoning cause. Of this leading article of the christian faith, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews urges the shedding of the blood of animals in sacrifice as the grand type, and the undeniable evidence. By the divine institution and design of the typical atonement under the law, he establishes the truth of the real atonement effected by the death of Jesus Christ.

Atonement always supposes a party offending and a party offended. It supposes that the offended holds the offender justly bound to suffer penal consequences as merited by the offence. It supposes that for the

offence an adequate reparation has been made in behalf of him, by whom it has been committed. The reparation made under these circumstances takes the place of the original punishment, becomes a fit ground, in view of which the offence may be remitted, and is properly denominated an atonement. The question proposed for present discussion regards the NECESSITY of the atonement of Jesus Christ, in order to God's remitting the sins of men.

In considering this question, we should conceive of the divine mind as being incapable of change. His displeasure at sin, his disposition and determination to treat it according to its demerit, his requiring an atonement, and his remitting the punishment on the ground of the atonement, are all as much in harmony with the immutability of the counsels of the all-wise and perfect Jehovah, as the various apparent changes in the administration of his moral government; as much so as when he suspends the bestowing of needed mercies on the preceding prayers of his saints; as much so as a thousand facts of constant occurrence, where one measure in the divine procedure is interlinked with another antecedent to it, and holding the place of a preparatory condition. Shall we say that the all-wise, all-comprehending mind of God changes its counsels, and that these various combinations of events, exhibiting so much relation and order, entered not into the vast scheme which from eternity it contemplated?

It is generally agreed that the salvation of sinful men by the gospel is the result of ~~God's gracious purpose, which purpose comprehends all the means and provisions, be they what they may, best fitted to accomplish the end.~~ It is easy to distinguish between that purpose and the infinite mind in which it was formed. There is no greater difficulty in conceiving of that purpose as being *unformed*, than there is in conceiving of it as being *formed*. Let us conceive of such a state. Let us conceive of that condition of the sinning creature which precedes all measures devised and adopted for his recovery. Let us carry our thoughts back, and conceive of a state in which the infinitely perfect Jehovah contemplates the fallen world of mankind, laden with all the guilt of its apostacy, and unprotected by any measures for its redemption. In this state the question arises, in order to the forgiveness and recovery of these sinning creatures, can we discover any valid reasons which render an atonement necessary? Or, is the divine nature, so far as we can comprehend it, such as to admit of their pardon and restoration without an atonement?

As a preliminary, we are constrained by a regard to the laws of fair discussion to protest against the adducing, as is often done, of any facts as bearing upon this question, which belong to the present gracious methods of God's dealings with the human race. Those methods are subsequent to that state to which the question relates. They form the very matter in dispute. The

question is, whether, in order to the adoption of those gracious methods, an atonement was not necessary? It would be an admirable specimen of reasoning to decide that an atonement was not originally necessary, because God has adopted gracious methods of dealing with our apostate race. What if the advocates of the atonement should maintain that it was made for sinners of mankind; that the mercies which flow from it do in some measure extend to the whole world, and that it has given birth to a system of gracious treatment to endure as long as time shall last, essentially different from the course which must have been pursued, had no expiation for human guilt been provided? The appeal is made to every principle of honest investigation, whether any part of God's present benignity to our revolted world, which we assert results from the efficacy of the atonement, can lawfully be used as a proof against the original necessity of the atonement? Arguments against that original necessity can no more be permitted to be urged from this quarter, than a claimant to an estate involved in a chancery-suit will be suffered to draw upon the proceeds of that estate, in order to carry on the prosecution. Here the principle would be simple and brief. Let it be first decided in whom the right of property is vested, and then let the lawful owner enter upon the possession of his estate with all its advantages unimpaired. To say therefore that no atonement was *originally* necessary, because God, *in the present state of things*, "makes his sun to rise on

the evil, and on the good, and sends rain on the just, and on the unjust ;” and proclaims himself by his prophets and apostles to be gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive the sinner upon his repentance, is taking for granted the main thing in dispute. It would afford logicians a fine example of that species of sophism which they term *a begging of the question*. It is turning the fruits of the atonement against the atonement itself—a parricidal act. It is adducing the child to prove, not only that the parent never existed, but that it was never necessary that he should exist.

The evangelical doctrine of atonement, as held by the Apostolical church and by all consistent Protestants, is founded in the independent, essential mercy of God. It originated in his infinite mercy. Strictly speaking, it was neither contemplated nor demanded by justice. It was an expedient, devised by boundless wisdom, and furnished by boundless love, to supersede the rigorous execution of justice. To this principle I call your special notice at this point of the discussion. It will cut off occasion for future cavilling, and help to place certain parts of the subject in their just light. It also affords the most triumphant refutation of an objection to which the enemies of our doctrine attach immense importance. They charge us with believing in an implacable God, in a Being who is cruel and revengeful in his nature, who is indisposed to show favour, who can be made favourable and merciful only by the infliction of pain upon his creatures. If such in truth be

our exhibition of the divine character, it merits the execration of every upright mind. No ! hearers ; the eternal, unbought love and compassion of God are the very fountain of the atonement. But for this, there could have been no deliverance, no hope for an apostate world. The love of God preceded the gift of Christ ; and so far is God from being essentially implacable, that had he not been essentially placable, the eternal Son would never have been given. Fallen man, considered as a being capable of bliss and wo, is not the object of Jehovah's displeasure. Viewed in this light, he is the object of God's good will. He was so regarded in the contemplations of the eternal mind, while as "yet he had not made the earth nor the highest part of the dust of the world." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." In this view, on the subject of man's recovery, all balm-breathing, soul-soothing images of a Being moved by inherent mercy and compassion, "taking no pleasure in the death of the sinner," but avoiding the infliction of wo wherever he honourably can, arise before the mind. It is only when man is viewed in his complex character as a revolted, guilty creature, that a pure and righteous Being must, to use the strong language of his own lips, "pour out" on him his fury "like fire." And it was to do away this just ground of his wrath that the love of God found an expiation. It was that this purity might be vindicated, and that his mercy might have its perfect work, that God himself provided the "lamb for the

burnt offering." And does this wondrous measure deserve to be represented as casting so foul a reproach upon the adorable Supreme? Are we to be charged with making him implacable, because we believe that his perfections, in going forth to do their strange work, respect themselves, one another, and the propriety and fitness of occasions? Is it then such a mighty crime to believe that the divine perfections suspend their outward works on certain conditions, and operate in the view of valid and seemly reasons? In truth, it becomes our adversaries to inquire whether they can shield their own heads against charges which they so confidently and reproachfully hurl upon the heads of others. Do not they themselves pronounce the exercise of God's mercy toward sinners impossible except upon certain conditions? Do not they themselves maintain that "without the repentance and obedience of the sinner he cannot be saved?" that "God could not pardon us before repentance without violating the rectitude of his own laws?" and that "God will freely forgive those, and *those only*, who sincerely repent?" Nay, do not many of them contend that "the death of Christ has a special influence in removing punishment as a condition or method of pardon, without which repentance would not avail us?" Might not we now assert, were we disposed to be disingenuous, and to impute to rationalists sentiments which they abhor and disavow, that they represent God as an implacable, revengeful Being, who is averse to the exercise of mercy, and who must be made

willing to forgive, by the repentance and the obedience of the sinner? Might not we with equal justice ask, What! is God then so implacable, so disinclined by his own nature to show compassion and to act the part of a father toward his poor, powerless, unhappy creatures, that, according to some, nothing short of their repentance, and according to others, nothing short of the death of his own Son, could move him to grant them his forgiveness? But we know that such declamation would be as disingenuous as it is absurd. The objection is a palpable perversion of the truth; and there is nothing in it that presses us, which may not be retorted with equal force upon the adversary himself. We are now prepared to enter upon a direct investigation of the question.

The forgiveness of sin essentially depends on the whole character of God, on his moral views and feelings respecting sin, and on the reasons which render its punishment necessary. It is here that we should look for all the obstacles, if there be any, which obstruct the exercise of grace, and oppose the remission of sin, and for all the reasons which render an atonement in behalf of sinful men, with a view to their receiving that blessed benefit, indispensable. Here, then, let us commence the discussion.

The doctrine which I propose to illustrate and establish is contained in the following proposition: *The great moral reasons which require the punishment*

of sin render the atonement necessary in order to its forgiveness. Two things are to be accomplished :

First, I am to prove that there are great moral reasons which require that sin should be punished.

Secondly, I am to show that these reasons render the atonement necessary in order to its forgiveness.

God's holiness and justice form the first moral reason. This is "the ground pillar and chief buttress" of my argument. If he is a holy and a righteous God, it is impossible that sin should pass unpunished. You ask me what is God's holiness ; what is his rectitude ? Had you inquired respecting man's holiness, and righteousness, it would have been an easier task to reply. For man we have a standard ; but for "the First, the Supreme of things," there can be no standard. He is independent of all, the original of all. You ask me, is his holiness the result of an act of his will ? That cannot be ; for it implies that God's will preceded his holiness, and that had he seen fit to will to be otherwise than holy, he might have been the opposite—a horrible thought ! Does it then consist in his love of himself ? But beings love themselves who are not holy. Is it then his determination to treat all created beings according to their worth ? This makes his holiness dependent for its existence upon creatures whose very being is a contingency ; and as we can conceive of their not existing, so such a supposition would annihilate the divine holiness. We must go farther back. We must look for his holiness among the qualities essential to his

being. We must look for it there as much as for any other attribute. It is an essential part of his eternal character. It is his immutable disposition toward all points that involve morality. I would say it is his most perfect perception of right and wrong: it is his most perfect approbation of right; it is his most perfect abhorrence of wrong. It is his moral worth. It is that which renders him the becoming object of his own supreme regard, and the becoming object of the supreme regard of all sentient beings; and hence in the moral law, his first requirement is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. And his justice is also inherent and essential. It is the disposition of his nature to act, in all worlds, on all occasions, in the most exact conformity to his moral sense. In heaven, earth, or hell, no being shall ever have ground of complaint, that in his treatment of him, God has forgotten his own holiness and justice.

That he is thus holy and righteous in his own nature, must be evident on a very slight examination. For this—and this alone, lays the foundation for all honourable thoughts, for all acceptable love, reverence, and service, in the bosoms of intelligent creatures. It is proved by the whole constitution of our moral nature, by our best affections and passions, implanted not in vain. Can you love and reverence a God without inherent perfect holiness and righteousness? Can you esteem and worship a God who perceives not and regards not, originally and of himself, the difference

between right and wrong, sin and holiness? May it be said without impiety?—if it may, let it then be said—he regards not, he is incapable of regarding, right and wrong. He regards them not in his own moral disposition, regards them not in his most secret thoughts. What have you done? Shocking to be repeated and to be heard; you have, so far as the morality of things is concerned, brought him down to the level of a mere blind physical agent. You have made him like the fragrant flower, like the blooming garden, like the refulgent sun, like the whirlwind, like the thunderbolt, like the volcano. Are these the proper objects of your reverence and homage? The beautiful objects of the material world, and the grand, delight and elevate the beholder; but they impart their agreeable qualities with equal readiness to the righteous and the unrighteous. The dread objects of nature spend their fury in their blind course; but in the evils which they bring, they heed no difference between the holy and the unholy. To love, and honour, and serve, a being like these is impossible.

And is it for a finite mind to imagine a Being so unblessed as God must be, on the hypothesis that to approve and cherish holiness, and to hate evil and banish it from his presence, is not an essential part of his character? To be blessed in himself, and to be the subject of blessing from others, he must know himself, truly, and independently of all extraneous reasons,

entitled to his own supreme regard. In the depths of his own divine nature, he must contemplate that which entitles him to the supreme regard of all beings. There is not a person in this assembly who is not capable of forming some estimate of his own intrinsic moral worth. And wo to him, should he be conscious that his bosom is void of those upright principles which make the heart of the holy man a heaven. Wo to him, should he discover himself to be the subject of the execration of all to whom his principles are known. How lost then to every sensation of happiness would the consciousness of such deformity as the want of inherent moral perfection implies, render a Being infinitely powerful and intelligent! He knows himself to be unworthy of his own approbation, unworthy of the approbation of the created universe. He knows that the feelings of moral creatures, so far as they know him, can be none other than those of apprehension and dismay. He knows that there is nothing in himself that can create confidence, nothing that can inspire esteem. He knows them to be disposed to flee his presence, as one with whom the righteous may be as the wicked.

And is it for such a Being to be the pure, untroubled, constant source of bliss to that universe over whose destinies it is his province to preside? He is omnipotent, but his omnipotence *may* be put forth in the violation of right, and in the support of wrong. He has omniscience, but who has a pledge that it will on all occasions be exercised in the attainment of the highest

good? He is every where present, but how and whence do we know that it is to command the springing up of blessings, and to fix the boundaries of evil?

No, my hearers, such an hypothesis can never stand. To be a deserving object of love, reverence, and worship, to his moral creation, to be a supremely happy Being, and to be the source of blessing to the system which he sways, God must be intrinsically, essentially holy and righteous.

Let us apply these principles. To a Being who is not indebted for his holiness and righteousness to any external cause whatever, whose very essence is holy, in what light must that appear which is unholy and unrighteous? We should at once infer that it must be regarded as an offence and an abhorrence. The inference is just. In his word,* God thus expostulates with his people on the subject of a particular sin: "*Oh! do not this abominable thing which I hate.*"

And how can it be otherwise? Sin rises up in direct opposition and hostility to himself. It is in itself, apart from all extraneous reasons, deserving of abhorrence. It insults him in that part of his character in which he is most worthy of universal and supreme veneration, and which more than any other requires to be guarded and vindicated. Sin offers him the greatest affront and dishonour. Tell me not that God cannot be dishonoured, that he is incapable of being injured, that he is far above the reach of disgrace, and therefore he need

* Jer. xliv. 4.

not be supposed to manifest any displeasure on his own account. Of personal injury no one has for an instant supposed him capable. But must we therefore suppose him indifferent to the light in which his moral creature regards him, and to the treatment which he gives him? This will never approve itself to reason or to revelation. It saps the very foundation of all religion. It cuts the very sinews of duty. And it is not true. If his word is uniform in any thing, it is in exhibiting the Deity as being jealous for his own glory, as taking pleasure in the hearty praises of his moral creatures, and as manifesting the most fearful displeasure at dishonour done to his own name. . "He that offereth praise glorifieth me." "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." Is it not hence undeniable that there is that evil in sin which calls forth his holy indignation, not merely because it exposes the person who commits it to pain, not because it may seduce other moral beings from their bright course, but because it is an affront and a dishonour to God himself?

Between such a Being and all moral dependencies exists the nearest and highest of all relations. Homage and honour to his person, and subjection to his will, is the resulting obligation. To fulfil this obligation must be right, though there should be no intelligent being present to be edified by the example. You cannot, hearers, but perceive in it a seemliness, a congruity, a

rendering "unto God the things that are God's," which instantly approves itself to your sense of right. And if this in itself be right, the reverse must in itself be wrong. If this merit praise and reward, the reverse must merit censure and punishment. The withholding of deserved homage and obedience must be regarded by him to whom they are due as an intrinsic evil. He suffers an injury in his rights due from his creature which lies open to his displeasure. And to manifest himself otherwise than as being displeased, to omit treating it in accordance with its desert, and in direct pursuance of his own holy nature, would be at variance with his inherent moral disposition. Eternal, infinite holiness cannot regard such a case in any other light than as being offensive. Look upon this picture, hearers, the picture of the High and the Holy One, not drawn by the gloomy imagination of some bigoted fanatic, but by the Spirit of eternal truth. This exhibits him as essentially holy and righteous, as frowning upon moral evil, because it is impossible that his own righteous disposition, independent of every external consideration, should treat it with favour: "*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.*"* It is not because it will promote the order and the happiness of the created system, it is not because it will be a means of recovering the person who commits it from sin's black gulf, that God cannot behold evil; but it is because *his eyes are too pure,*

* Hab. i. 13

his nature is too holy ; and hence arises that impossibility predicated of him by that Spirit who searcheth the deep things of God, and who hath revealed them unto us.

It is the very nature therefore of a holy Being to love holiness, and to hate moral evil. Holiness has an intrinsic beauty and attractiveness which merit approbation and honour wherever it exists. And moral evil has an intrinsic deformity and loathsomeness ; and it deserves to be abhorred in all persons, in all societies, and in all worlds. God therefore cannot but love and approve holiness ; he cannot but abhor and condemn sin. Such opposite affections must give existence and effect to a course of treatment toward each as opposite as the respective affections themselves. Good must distinguish holiness, penal evil, sin. If our views of the intrinsic, essential difference between right and wrong, sin and holiness, are true, how a perfectly, essentially holy Being, whose is the authority and the power to take knowledge of all moral actions, to whom it belongs to distribute rewards and punishments, can avoid manifesting his disapprobation in such a manner as shall be suitable to the actual difference between sin and holiness, and still preserve his character as an essentially holy and righteous God, and continue to merit that esteem and respect which nothing but such a character can produce in his own mind, as well as in that of every other intelligence, is a question the solution of which remains yet to be discovered. Is it a fit subject

of praise, does it tend to exalt him in the esteem of intelligent beholders, that, in his treatment of holy and guilty creatures, God should manifest a due regard to their intrinsic moral worth, is a question exceedingly simple. Its correct decision asks no depth of learning. Let it be referred to the common notions of right and wrong, and the decision will be at once pronounced. The great reason, therefore, why sin cannot pass unpunished is not that God takes pleasure, as if he were governed by a spirit of malevolence and revenge, in the infliction of evil; but that the infliction of evil is the becoming, necessary treatment which sin in its own nature deserves at the hands of one who is infinitely holy and just. And hence it is that, things remaining unaltered, such treatment must continue necessary and unavoidable. He cannot withhold from it that treatment without becoming indifferent to its demerit. Either his nature must change, or the nature of sin must change, or he must continue to regard it with displeasure expressed by its appropriate penal results.

I may appear to do injustice to your understanding, hearers, in dwelling upon a truth so obvious. Nor would I have delayed your attention so long, did not this part of the subject possess a vital importance in the discussion. It is this part of the divine character which gives the utmost annoyance to the adversary of the atonement; and here I would look for the well-head of his deep and dangerous error. And but too many of those who embrace the hope of the cross, have rashly

excluded the essential holiness and rectitude of the divine nature from all influence in the punishment of sin and, by consequence, in the atonement. They have conceded to the adversary that the Divine Being, in his treatment of sin, is governed solely by a regard to the external creation. They have forgotten that he has his own proper, eternal principles, essential to his nature, to guide him ; and that, too, independent of all created systems. They have forgotten that he, who is infinitely holy and righteous in his own being, has no need to make inquiries at the mouth of his own creation, whether sin is a proper object of his expressed abhorrence, or whether it may be passed by as a thing entitled to impunity. They have forgotten that such a Being has his own moral perceptions and his own character and honour to consult and to vindicate, as well as the interests of the created system ; and that, while the latter is in most perfect harmony with the former, it is in comparison with it but "as the small dust of the balance."

I proceed to state a second moral reason, intimately connected with the preceding, why sin should not be permitted to pass unpunished. It is necessary, as the means of leading intelligent beings to reverence and honour God as a Being essentially holy and righteous.

If the holiness and righteousness of God be the foundation and source of that exalted moral respect and honour which his intelligent creatures owe him, it is necessary that this part of his character should be made

clear to their perception. It is necessary that, in fact as well as in theory, the conviction that in God's dispensations it is well with the righteous and ill with the wicked, should be most deeply impressed. They must be brought to know, not only the general truth that punishment is demanded and inflicted, but that it is demanded and inflicted by a HOLY BEING, and BECAUSE HE IS HOLY. The naked fact of the suffering of evil by an evil-doer would not be sufficient. The perception of this bare fact would inspire fear and dread, not esteem and reverence; because it could not be known but that the evil witnessed might have been produced by a blind physical cause destitute of moral principle. It is only when the beholders know that God abhors and punishes sin *because he is a holy and a righteous Being*; and *because sin is intrinsically deserving of this expression of his abhorrence*, that they enter into the divine character, that they adore, with a reverence the most profound, his moral purity, that they feel an inclination to serve and an unwillingness to offend him, and that they perceive the intrinsic evil of sin, and experience the power of the injunction, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." They then behold this exalted part of his character carried out in a perceptible form, and in contemplating it their hearts receive all those purifying, elevating, and transforming impressions which become them as his moral creatures.

And here I must be permitted to turn your attention towards an astonishing defect, under which the views of the adversary labour in regard to the character of God. The practical evils of this defect are strikingly visible in regard to the point of which I am at this moment speaking. By some, the moral purity, or holiness and righteousness of God is entirely rejected, whilst with others we find the words but not the attributes. With these God's holiness is the same as his benevolence;—all is benevolence—even the punishment which he inflicts. Holiness and benevolence are thus confounded. But these attributes are wholly distinct in their aims, and they lead to distinct and equally important views of the Deity. His benevolence is his disposition to produce the happiness of his creatures. It contemplates them not as sinful, or as holy beings—but as beings capable of pleasure or pain. So far as its subjects are concerned, the removal of misery, and the enjoyment of happiness, are its great and ultimate design. Now, will the hypothesis of the adversary that God is all benevolence, and is destitute of essential holiness, bear examination? Let us for an instant grant, that in dealing with sinful beings God aims only at the production of happiness. What will be the impression made on the minds of his rational creatures in regard to himself? Does it require any effort to see that his moral worth, with respect to the right and the wrong of things, will never be brought into view? That even the pain which he inflicts will not be in demonstration

of his own holiness and righteousness;—it is but the best means chosen by wisdom for attaining the end fixed by benevolence, the conferring of happiness? That the regard of the beholders will not be founded in moral approbation of a moral principle, the purity of God; that it will be only the simple emotion of joy arising from the gratification of the native desire of happiness? That it will be of the same nature with the regard felt by the savage for the fountain which has slaked his thirst, or for the sun which lights him on the chase? Can such a view of God purify, elevate, ennoble the spectators of the scene? Can this teach them to regard and to shun sin, as in itself the greatest of evils?

As a means, therefore, of leading intelligent beings to reverence and honour God's holiness, and righteousness, the punishment of sin seems to be an indispensable measure in his administration.

There is a third great reason which renders it impossible but that a holy and just Being should manifest his displeasure at sin, and follow it with penal displays of its evil nature. Now we are prepared to unite with our opponents in celebrating the praises of benevolence. We contend that even the benevolence of God demands that sin should not be permitted to pass unpunished.

To him the created universe looks up as the Parent of eternal holiness, order, and well being. These are to be found and enjoyed only in subjection to God, and in perfect, undeviating obedience to his laws. That he

should enforce such subjection and obedience by holding the transgressor responsible for his misdeeds, and so administering his government as that sin shall not pass unpunished, is required by the best interests of the created system. In that system where sin does not enter but at the peril of receiving its just desert, and where holiness ever meets the smiles of the purest and best of Beings, there we may look for the early growth and the ripe fruits of the noblest endowments of rational existences. There each creature will feel the influence of the strongest motives to remain within its own proper orbit relatively to itself—to its fellow-creature—to its God.

We say not that such results will always and necessarily follow from this great moral fact. The lamentable catastrophe which has befallen at least two orders of created intelligences, is too vividly present to our minds, and too deeply felt at our hearts, to permit a thought so contrary to truth. But the failure is in every instance evidently to be traced up to the very principle which made it an indispensable feature of the divine government. What is the government of God? It is his dominion over free moral agents, endowed with a sense of moral obligation. Before them he has placed right and wrong, sin and holiness, for their election. How is such a government to be administered? It is to be administered by the influence of motives. He has created them with a perfectly holy bias; he has left them to act freely—to choose the good—and to

refuse the evil. He has not only done all this, but more. He has encompassed the good with all, that, to a moral taste, can render it lovely, attractive, and worthy of all approbation. In one word, he has made good synonymous with heaven. He has done more—He has laid open the loathsomeness of sin. He conceals not his own abhorrence. He binds to it his curse. He binds to it a train of penal consequences which present it in a form not only hateful but terrific. In one word, he has made sin synonymous with hell. Now decide, my hearers, under such a system, a system founded on the relations of free moral agents, could a holy and benevolent Being do otherwise? Can moral agents be without law? Must they not be left to act from motives? Is compulsion admissible? And where law is to be obeyed, where sin is the grand evil to be avoided, where compulsion is inadmissible, where motives are the grand springs of action—there every dictate of reason—there every principle of benevolence, demands that sin should not pass unpunished. That after all in some instances the good is refused and the evil preferred, is a phenomenon which I do not feel myself bound to explain. It presents a difficulty equally pressing to every system. But such a government being once established, that a holy and a benevolent Being should not bring the moral motives that necessarily flow from a righteous and exact distribution of merited punishments among the guilty, to bear upon the unnumbered myriads of beings whose

choice is yet to be decided, and upon whose decision are suspended character and glory, and heaven and hell, is the last position I will engage to believe or to defend. The created universe is thus made a gainer in holiness and bliss by the punishment of sin.

I have thus set before you some of the great moral reasons which forbid that sin should pass unpunished. Its punishment is necessary, whether we consider it as the becoming treatment which sin merits on its own account at the hands of a holy and a righteous God, or as the means of leading intelligent beings to form just views of the divine character, and to reverence and exalt him as essentially holy and righteous, or as one of the grand measures in the government of free moral agents, for the preservation of holiness, order, and well being.

To this reasoning the adversary, so far as I know, opposes but one objection of any moment ; and when it has been stated in his own words, my hearers will do him the justice to say that it is entitled to serious consideration.

“Justice,” he says, “gives the right to punish, but it does not impose an obligation to exercise this right. As God has an undoubted right, it would always be just for him to punish transgressors, but it does not follow that he is obliged to do it. If he chooses to pardon sinners on certain conditions, or unconditionally, he may do it without any violation of his justice.” From the whole tenor of his reasoning it is evident that he speaks of justice, in its absolute, unqualified form, or in other

words, of punitive justice. Grant me leave to show you the unsoundness of this position.

1. "God," it is said, "has an undoubted right to punish the transgressor." Here we are entirely agreed, and we rejoice to hear so frank and important an acknowledgment. But how does this acknowledgment comport with another sentiment expressed by the adversary in every variety of form; that if God punishes for any other end than the good of the transgressor, he ceases to be just, and he becomes cruel and unlovely. That this latter position is an egregious fallacy, will be presently evinced. But in the objection which we are now examining, it is acknowledged that God has a right, an unqualified right, to punish the transgressor, and that if he see fit, he may exercise it. Can that be cruel, revengeful, unamiable, which God has an undoubted right to do if he please? Thus by granting that God has a right to punish, the adversary makes a perfect surrender of all his declamation against punitive justice.

2. "Justice," it is said, "gives the right to punish, but it does not impose an obligation to exercise this right." This we deny. If adequate reasons exist why justice should be executed, they carry with them an obligation to exercise justice. If declining to punish the offender according to his ill desert would be to act contrary to his essential holiness and righteousness—would be to overthrow his righteous laws—would lead intelligent beings to form erroneous conceptions of his

character—would be to encourage moral agents in the idea that sin is but a slight evil and may be committed with impunity—God would owe it to himself, and he would owe it to the created universe, to exercise the right of punishing. He could not be a holy, a just, and I may add a benevolent God, were he to pardon sinners unconditionally. The unconditional pardon of sinners, therefore, is forbidden by the strongest considerations.

3. To act agreeably to his holiness and justice, in punishing sin, and to exercise grace in the forgiveness of sin, cannot be conceived to be equally sovereign. God cannot choose to be holy and just, or not holy and just, with the same sovereignty as he can choose to be gracious or not gracious. Had the adversary asserted that, while God has a right to show grace to the undeserving where it is consistent, yet that right imposes no obligation, he would have uttered truth; for the very word grace shows that where it is exercised it might justly have been withheld. But this is far from being the case in regard to holiness and justice. God can cease to show grace, but he cannot cease to exercise holiness and justice. These are always necessary and essential.

4. But there is a still greater absurdity involved in this position. It makes God's punishing sin perfectly arbitrary. He may punish it or not as he pleases. Let us suppose that he should exercise his right and punish the transgressor. In this case he acts from no grand controlling reason which renders it necessary to

punish; for then the principle of the objection would be violated, since in a moral sense he could not do otherwise. The case would then involve an obligation to punish—and that freedom to punish or remit punishment, for which the objector contends, would be destroyed. The case supposed therefore must wholly exclude the question of right and wrong. He cannot act from that regard to this question which is essential to his own holy nature. He exercises the right to punish, not because it is holy and just, for what is holy and just ought to be done, but because he simply chooses to exercise it. As far as any great reasons rendering it right and necessary are concerned, he might have refrained from punishing the transgressor. Of course, on this hypothesis there can be no discovery of his own moral excellency. We do not see in it that he is holy and just, and, as the scriptures declare, “of purer eyes than to behold evil,” and “unable to look upon iniquity.” We behold a Being possessed only of sovereignty and exercising sovereignty. Hence here is no ground for moral esteem and reverence. How can we reverence any Being as holy and righteous, who, in a case which directly involves the whole question of right and wrong with reference to his own character, and the light in which other beings are to regard him, is a liberty to act without the least regard to it, and who does in reality act without regard to it? We never can approve and venerate a judge, who, in his treatment of the guilty, claims the right of acting in

an arbitrary manner ; who feels himself at liberty to treat the guilty as if he were innocent ; and who, when he awards and inflicts punishment, does it not because the nature of the case requires it as proper and unavoidable, but because he chooses to exercise a right with which he idly imagines himself to be invested. We should at once pronounce that judge destitute of moral principle, and deserving universal detestation.

5. Further, if we say that God can as well forego, if he pleases, punishing the transgressor, as exercise the right of punishing, we absolutely annihilate the right of punishing. On this hypothesis punishment is unnecessary. God can, if he see fit, avoid punishing without injury to any interest. It is impossible, on this ground, that he should ever punish ; and this pretended right cannot be exercised without horrible cruelty. What ! will a benevolent being ever determine to inflict evil upon a sentient creature, when there are no reasons which render it necessary and unavoidable ? Has he not testified by his own blessed existence that he takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner ? Will he then inflict penal evil merely for its own sake ? And surely it will be for its own sake, if he can as well avoid inflicting it. Who does not immediately perceive that if this be all that renders punishment necessary, God's goodness will always interpose and exclaim, " This penal evil need not be inflicted—must not be inflicted. Far be it from the benevolent and just God to put his creatures to pain without imperious necessity.

To inflict it without necessity, in an arbitrary manner, is unrighteous."

If the unsoundness of this position were not already clear, I might follow out this argument, and show that this principle destroys the grace of forgiveness. But enough has been said to prove that this doctrine of the right of punishing or not punishing is fraught with error, and that it does not invalidate our previous reasoning. Those great moral reasons still exist and operate, and they forbid that sin should pass unpunished.

But the adversary cannot yet in justice be dismissed. He advances sentiments respecting the great end of divine punishment for which he is accountable at the bar of truth. It is important that those sentiments should be heard and canvassed. When the views of both parties have been fairly brought forward, it will be easy to compare them, and to form a judgment accordant with reason and the sacred standard. The position of the adversary is as follows: "*The sole and ultimate end of God in punishing, is the reformation and happiness of the offender. Beyond this, punishment cannot be extended without its becoming cruel and unjust.*" It follows, hence, that the repentance of the sinner puts an end to punishment, and is immediately followed by forgiveness without atonement.

This is a cardinal principle in the rational system, on the question of man's acceptance. I trust that a few remarks properly directed will aid you in discovering

its falsity. I commence with observing that natural evil inflicted upon a transgressor, the sole and ultimate end of which is his reformation, is not punishment. It is misnamed. It is chastisement—paternal, corrective discipline. This then it seems is all the penal evil which the wicked are taught to expect. God cannot inflict any other without incurring the charge of cruelty and injustice. But my hearers, the holy scriptures draw a broad distinction between God's paternal chastenings, of which his children are the subjects when they transgress his laws, and the end of which is their reformation and happiness, and that punishment which he will finally inflict upon his incorrigible enemies. I submit it to every person who is moderately conversant with the holy oracles. Of Judas the traitor, the Master said, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." Concerning the punishment of the finally condemned, he says, "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." "There is a sin which hath never forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." And Dives in torment is described as being perfectly convinced, of his folly by the punishment which he endured; and yet he was told that a transition from his hell to Abraham's bosom was impossible. According to the principle of the rationalist—by all this we are to understand nothing more, than that Judas and Dives, and other incorrigible enemies of God are suffering only a wholesome, fatherly discipline, the sole and ultimate end of which is their reformation and hap-

piness; and yet this fatherly discipline is never to accomplish its object—this discipline is never to terminate! Judas is never to see the moment when he will bless the day of his birth! Dives will never escape the unquenchable torment! If this be fatherly discipline, what, then, must be the pouring out of God's unmixed wrath!

This position is also wholly irreconcilable with the scriptural exhibition of the principles and affections which influence all true penitents in turning from sin unto God. They regard their sin as meriting detestation, and calling for repentance, not so much on the ground of its interference with their own happiness as on the ground of its being intrinsically hateful, and thus deserving God's displeasure. This enters essentially into the penitent emotions ascribed in holy scripture to the humbled offender. Such were the penitent emotions of David when he exclaimed, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." But according to the system under discussion, the injury which the offender has drawn down upon himself by his sin, and the removal of which can be God's sole end in punishing him, should also be the sole, great end of his contrition. For if God cannot justly punish him for any other end than his reformation and happiness, then the sole evil which the transgressor has to deplore, is the ruinous bearing of his crimes upon his own peace. Why should his aim in repenting of sin extend in the slightest de-

gree beyond God's sole ground of displeasure and punishment?

Let us suppose every other end of punishment, separate from the holiness of God, to be annihilated. He does not now punish to deter others by the influence of example, nor to reform the sinner, nor to impart to the intelligent creation the idea of his rectitude. If he now punish, he must punish because his own holiness and justice dictate and demand punishment. In such a case, would the evil-doer be less bound to feel and manifest the most profound abasement? The rationalist is compelled to reply that he is not at all bound; because in such a case God cannot be displeased with him, and he cannot evince his penal displeasure without becoming cruel and unjust. Therefore on this ground the sinner has nothing to lament. Why should he lament that for which God cannot evince his anger without becoming cruel and unjust? Nay, it will follow on this hypothesis that sin against God, simply *as such*, is no moral evil. If God can *justly* punish sin solely for the end of the sinner's reformation and happiness, then it deserves punishment solely as connected with that end; and, therefore, should that end be put out of view, no punishment is *justly* deserved. But if it deserves no punishment, it is no moral evil; for *desert of punishment* is essential to our notion of moral evil. And it will further follow from this system, that if the sinner could only escape into some part of the universe where he might avoid destroying his own happiness, he might

glory in dishonouring and insulting God, without deserving the slightest measure of divine disapprobation. He would stand encircled by a magic ring; and from within that sanctuary he might with impunity defy the holiness and the justice of the Almighty. God could not touch him without becoming cruel and unjust.

Besides, this view of the end of punishment excludes the essential holiness and justice of God, as an end, from every part of the transaction. Indeed it virtually denies his essential holiness and justice. The end assigned for the punishment of sin is wholly independent and exclusive of these attributes. The sole and ultimate end is the reformation of the offender. This implies that were it not for the reformation of the offender, there would be no end for which he could justly be punished. Should God express his penal displeasure against his sins, as intrinsically meriting such treatment, with the view to exercising and vindicating his own holiness and justice, and supporting the honour of his own government as an end, this system denounces him as a cruel, unjust Being. Do not my intelligent hearers clearly perceive what must follow? The instant we overlook the inherent, essential holiness and rectitude of God, as exercised in the punishment of sin for their own excellency's sake as an end, and set up other ends at which he aims, and pronounce them the sole and ultimate ends for which sin may justly be punished, that instant we virtually deny the inherent holiness of the Divine Nature and the intrinsic demerit

of sin. We imply that were it not for those other ends which exclusively awaken the displeasure of God, and call forth its penal expression, he could neither hate nor punish sin.

And where shall we find room for forgiveness and grace, if the reformation of the transgressor be the sole and ultimate end of punishment? What punishment is remitted? What sin is forgiven? Not, surely, that for which the transgressor is punished. Punishment for that he has endured as far as it could without cruelty be extended. The end is reformation; and until that end is accomplished, punishment is continued. In regard to this, it is absurd to say that any part of it is remitted. Indeed it is not punishment; it has no view to sin *as such*. It is for the amendment of the offender; and when he does amend, it is not proper to say I have punished him, but I have corrected and amended him. Nor as yet has any thing been forgiven. If there be any sin forgiven, therefore, it must be something independent of that for which punishment has been inflicted. It must be something for which punishment might have been inflicted, but which is graciously remitted. But, hearers, it is denied that God could inflict punishment for any thing beyond the sinner's reformation. I ask again, what is there to be forgiven? Can God be said to forgive that which it would be cruel and unjust to punish? On this hypothesis, therefore, it is evident that there is nothing to be

forgiven. Consequently there can be no display of grace.

This view, then, of the end of punitive justice, which forms the very essence of rationalism, with reference to the terms of pardon, is altogether irreconcilable with our fundamental notions of the Divine Being. It confounds the broad distinction between paternal correction and punishment; it is at variance with the true scriptural grounds of repentance; it involves this capital error, that sin as committed against God is no moral evil. It proceeds on this singularly impious assumption, that, but with a view to the sinner's good, God can neither hate nor punish sin. And it destroys all room for the exercise of pardoning grace. It must therefore be rejected. Urged by the view of these absurdities, we are compelled to pronounce the system unworthy of belief; and we discover additional reason to stand firm in the faith of our own principles.

The punitive justice of God in view of sin has now I trust been amply confirmed and vindicated. It follows from all that has been advanced, that the punishment of sin is an unavoidable measure in the divine government. Punishment must of necessity be inflicted and suffered.

Our second position may now be considered as being so evident, that to be believed it needs only to be stated: *These moral reasons which require the punishment of sin, render the atonement necessary in order to its forgiveness.*

From what has been advanced, we conceive it follows with the clearness of demonstration, that, on the supposition that God in his adorable mercy has purposed to rescue sinful men from their ruined condition, the gracious interposition must be effected in such a way as shall be entirely harmonious with his own essential holiness, and with the largest amount of well being in the rational creation. In other words, the penal manifestation of his eternal abhorrence of sin must form an essential constituent in that measure or system of measures whereby his merciful purpose toward his rebellious subjects is accomplished. And whatever answers the ends of justice with respect to the holy nature of God, with respect to the production of adequate perceptions and affections in the minds of intelligent spectators, and with respect to the maintenance and promotion of order, holiness, and happiness in the moral universe, must be a suitable ground in the view of which the transgressor may be forgiven. In such a case his bonds may be loosed, and he may again be raised to the dignity and bliss whence he has wilfully fallen. No substantial reason can be given why a Being infinitely benevolent as well as just, who has been pleased to ordain the redemption of guilty men, should not when the ends of justice are satisfied remit their doom.

And these ends are most fully secured in the atonement of our Almighty Saviour. By his own compassionate and voluntary act, and in accordance with the Father's eternal and gracious counsels, he placed him-

self in the humbled state of entire oneness with man's apostate race. By thus assuming the human nature, not for himself, but for human beings, he also assumed the human responsibilities. The reparation due to the Most High and Holy in the behalf of his rebellious brethren, for he is not ashamed to call us brethren, he rendered by his obedience unto death. The sinner's guilt was thus expiated by his gracious Mediator, and the perfections and government of God were vindicated even more gloriously, than if divine justice had taken its direct course in the personal punishment of the offender. God "hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

With an efficacy which to that heart which contemplates it in its just light must prove irresistible, the atonement exhibits God as a Being infinitely holy and righteous, regarding himself as supremely worthy of the entire homage, love, and obedience of all moral existences, whose rectitude is such that he can give no other laws than those which are founded in eternal and immutable right, can administer no other government but that which is conducted on principles of justice and judgment, can hold no communion with rational beings who are unholy, cannot mark sin but to abhor it, and as the Sovereign Ruler, to manifest towards it his abhorrence, cannot pardon it without bearing testimony,

* 2 Cor. v. 21. Heb. vii. 27.

heard with astonishment by heaven, earth, and hell, that it is an endless evil.

And what inducements does the atonement hold out to moral agents to esteem, admire, adore, and obey, the Most High and Holy God, and to persevere in this exalted and exalting course? As the attainment of a supreme regard for holiness and an entire detestation of sin must produce the most pure and enduring happiness, what measure could so directly and so powerfully tend to promote and extend the highest happiness of the created system as the atonement? Which system will tend more efficaciously to check the career of sin, to purify the universe, to stimulate to the noblest efforts in all that is blissful, Godlike; that system which views and treats sin as the greatest evil; an evil not only affecting the well being of the creature, but levelling the foulest reproach at the ever glorious God; in itself hateful, and deserving and demanding the execration of all upright beings in every light in which it can be viewed; or that system which regards it as interfering only with the happiness of those who commit it, and as calling for penalty solely on that ground.

The essential difference between the two systems is that the one exalts the good of creation as the sole, great end of God's moral administration; thus casting the Deity himself wholly into the shade; the other gives to God the first and the last place, and exhibits him as making himself the first and the last end in all his works. This view comprehends all, secures all;

not only the highest happiness of the creation, which is most effectually embraced in that grand end; but what is infinitely above and beyond it, the glory and the self-approbation of the thrice-blessed Jehovah. We cannot but consider the opposite system as contracted, derogatory to a Being of infinite purity, overlooking, nay annihilating, the independent, immutable, and eternal difference between right and wrong; whilst it is the glory of our view, that it upholds the morality of things in its fullest extent; it makes holiness something beyond a mere accident, an empty shadow with a name; something worth desiring and maintaining; that it depicts sin in its genuine character; that it measures the true value of objects by the only infallible standard, the holiness of God; that it treats every being according to its intrinsic value; that it gives honour where honour is due, censure where censure, penalty where penalty. And out of the whole system results the triumphant deliverance of unnumbered immortal beings from everlasting ruin; a glorious vindication of the character and the throne of the Most High, an immoveable foundation in the hearts of all moral intelligences for supremely reverencing and honouring, and worthily serving and obeying God, and the highest amount of well being to those portions of the universe to which the knowledge of man extends.

Humbling—profoundly humbling to the proud heart of man—is the tendency of these principles, we grant; but we are deeply persuaded that they open the only

access to our Father's house on high with all its happy mansions. They bring poverty, but it is to make rich ; they wound, but it is to heal ; they grieve and sadden the heart, but it is to bind it up with oil, and wine, and balm ; they destroy the soul, but it is to save the soul ; they annihilate the pride of all flesh, but it is to bring honour, and glory, and immortality.

DISCOURSE V.

THE ENMITY OF THE HUMAN HEART AGAINST THE CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

ROMANS VIII. 7.—“The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

IN whatever manner this passage may be translated, consistently with a proper regard to the connexion, and the obvious intention of the writer in the words themselves, it clearly refers to all who obey the propensities of their corrupt nature, instead of acting from those spiritual principles, or affections, which are produced in regeneration. The chief design of the apostle, from the beginning of the chapter, is, to illustrate the difference between christians, as renewed and excited to acts of duty by the Holy Spirit, and mankind in their natural state, or anterior to those gracious operations by which the heart is prepared cheerfully to yield itself to the influence of evangelical motives. By *the carnal*

mind, or the minding of the flesh, then, we are to understand that disposition, or state of the moral affections, which is characteristic of all unrenewed men, and which, amidst all its modifications, continues with unabated strength, till it is subdued by a celestial energy. This disposition is declared to be enmity against God; of so malignant a nature, that he regards those who are the subjects of it with utter aversion, and can accept none of their services; or rather, it is itself essential, unmixed hostility to the moral perfections, designs, and acts of Jehovah. The abstract form of the expression gives it a strength and emphasis particularly worthy of our attention. It resolves all the moral aims and feelings of unregenerate sinners into one dark principle—*opposition to their Supreme Ruler and Judge*.

The subject of the ensuing discourse will be that which this explanation of the text naturally suggests:

THE ENMITY OF THE HUMAN HEART AGAINST GOD.

I shall

I. *Notice some common grounds of mistake on this subject; and*

II. *Adduce more direct proofs of the enmity of the unrenewed heart against God.*

I. Many are startled at the announcement of such a proposition as that which I have supposed the text to contain; and are ready to meet it, as a gross libel on human nature. It is proper, therefore, to examine the

grounds, on which the imagined refutation of the doctrine rests, before we proceed to a more particular statement of the evidence in its support.

One source of error is the tendency in mankind to confound the dictates of the understanding, in reference to the divine character, with the spontaneous testimony of the heart. In christian lands, they, who admit the existence of God, generally agree in affirming that he is a Being of infinite perfection ; and few will directly charge him with weakness, folly, and injustice. It is, moreover, commonly allowed, that, as the Author of all happiness, he is entitled to our gratitude ; and that to *hate* him, must be a proof of the most finished depravity. But it is illogical hence to conclude, that the *hearts* of men really approve of his character, or that they are not wholly opposed to those attributes, which constitute his peculiar glory. Nothing is more common than a direct contrariety between the decisions of the judgment, and the all-controlling determinations of appetite and passion. Reason, in a multitude of instances, has little to do, either with our preferences or our aversions.

"I know the right, and I approve it too ;
I see the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue."

The drunkard, in his sober moments, knows full well that "wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging ;" and yet, goaded on by a resistless appetite,

he continues to press to his bosom the fell enemy, whose embrace is death and perdition.

Men may be unconscious of their opposition, and hence infer that it has no existence. This argument is inconclusive, because the want of consciousness, in these instances, may be explained, without supposing such a blameless heart, as it is alleged to prove. Of all the errors of mankind, none perhaps are so frequent as those which have respect to themselves, and their character. Many circumstances may conspire to conceal from the observation of sinners, that enmity against God which really exists in their breasts. A secret infidelity, by which the divine perfections are either wholly hidden, or viewed through a distorted medium, or dimly descried, like objects seen in the distant horizon, may serve to prevent the risings of an opposition, which, in sensible contact with the high attributes of the Divinity, would manifest itself with uncontrollable violence. The generality of impenitent men are evidently without any habitual and strong impression of the reality of the divine existence; and, therefore, their enmity, though fixed and entire, has little opportunity to exhibit itself to their perception, in the shape of direct resistance. The most violent antipathy would be apparently allayed, should the hated object assume to the mind the form of a phantom, or be but imperfectly discovered through the mists of uncertainty. Revenge itself is satisfied, when its victim is conceived to be beyond its reach—the tenant of the

grave, and the nutriment of the worm. Who would contend with a shadow? Opposition may also be kept in check by a sense of imbecility on the part of him by whom, it is indulged, and of resistless power in an adversary. The omnipotence of God, and the hopelessness of resistance to his will, are truths, which immediately press upon the mind, when, acting intelligently, it would prepare itself for a conflict with him. The sinner's high imaginings are prostrated. He sinks, terrified and abashed, into his own nothingness. "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." This conscious impotence, and pretended subjection, however, are no sure indications of a heart truly friendly to the Most High, but may exist in connexion with the most determined aversion to the glories of his nature and government. Give to the sinner the means of successful opposition, and then his disposition, with respect to God, will begin to exert itself, unawed and unrestrained. And can any unconverted man say, that did its support or ruin depend upon his will, he is absolutely certain the throne of Heaven would be safe? Mere inconsideration and carelessness may keep the sinner in ignorance of the interior operations of his depravity, as they may hinder his notice of nearly all that passes in the retired recesses of that world of wonders—his own soul. False views of the divine character, gratifying to pride, indolence, or attachment to created good, may soothe and comfort the most deadly enmity, which it is possible

should exist in the heart of any creature, to the holiness, and righteousness, and sovereignty, of God.

The homage of external respect which is paid by many sinners to religion and its institutions, may be alleged as an evidence that they are not enemies to their Maker. In this objection, the force of education on beings naturally imitative, the power of conscience, which is the property alike of all intelligent creatures, the beneficial influence of christian institutions even on the affairs of the world, the love of human estimation, the energy of servile fear in impelling the conduct contrary to the strongest biases of the will, and the untiring activity of a self-righteous spirit, are altogether overlooked; for these are sufficient to account for all the religion of unregenerate men, without supposing them to be actuated, in a single instance, by right affections towards God. All their apparent friendship, under their present circumstances of probation and hope, is entirely consistent with real, deep, and permanent enmity. It never has been, it never can be proved, that they serve God, or manifest regard for his word and ordinances, from any higher motive than selfishness. Their show of religion then, notwithstanding, they may be *at heart* the enemies of God.

Nor is the glow of imaginary love to the Divine Being, which is sometimes felt by unconverted men, any proof that they are not his enemies. They may form erroneous conceptions of his character, contem-

plating him as devoid of all those attributes which are terrible to the unholy, or as their particular friend, by whom they have been forgiven, and will be exalted to eternal happiness ; and with such a view of God, they may, while utterly unreconciled to him, feel the fervours of a selfish complacency in the weak, accommodating, partial creature of their own imagination. True love to any being implies friendship to him in the attributes which he actually possesses ; and that regard, which is exchanged for disgust, so soon as his real qualities are discovered, has clearly no other foundation than the fancy. In judging, then, of the dispositions of men towards the Most High, we must observe their feelings, as elicited by the manifestations of his true nature, and the conduct of his government, instead of tracing the operations of their minds, under the predominating control of opinions which have been generated by their own fond conceit. The most sordid and malignant beings may conceive of a God, to whom their hearts would feel no repugnance ; and devils themselves would praise Jehovah, should they believe him disposed to espouse their cause, in opposition to the honour of his law, and the paramount claims of his holy kingdom. A community of rebels, retaining and justifying the spirit that prompted them to array themselves in the attitude of hostile defiance, would cease to complain of a government that should vindicate their lawless acts, employ all its energies for their protection, or permit

itself to be trampled under foot in accommodation to their proud wishes and sanguinary struggles for dominion.

The social sympathies and the decencies of life, which are commonly found in countries blessed by the lights of civilization and christianity, are regarded by many as proofs of some innate sparks of goodness, and consequently of some relics, some elements, of pure love to God in the soul of man. The mistake in this reasoning arises from confounding mere instincts, and the refinements of enlightened self-love, with real benevolence; and from overlooking that system of restraints which Divine Providence is pleased to employ as essential to a dispensation of mercy. A sufficient evidence of the radical deficiency of these social virtues, useful and necessary as they are in a world like this, is, that they may, and often do exist, in conjunction with manifest indifference, or open opposition to any practical acknowledgment of God, to the duties of the sabbath, and all acts of worship. Many a polite and even humane man would blush more deeply to be found on his knees in prayer, than to be seen at the gaming table, or the race ground; and would covet the name of a debauchee and a duellist, rather than that of a saint. But how can that, which is consistent with a contemptuous disregard of all religion, imply, or have any tendency to promote, love to God? Did the common principles of humanity include that virtue which em-

braces the Divine Being in its regards, they would never be found, in any degree, disconnected from a correspondent reverence of the attributes, word, and worship of God. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

I have thus noticed the more common objections to the doctrine of this discourse. I proceed

II. *To adduce more direct proofs in its support.*

1. The native enmity of the human heart against God may be inferred from *its entire selfishness*. The existence of those instincts, which are sometimes denominated the benevolent propensities of our nature, is, I have already remarked, perfectly consistent with the supposition, that man, while unrenewed, seeks his own interest, in some of its forms, as the supreme object of his pursuit. Much of what is accounted generous and disinterested in his conduct, is done with an eye immediately and solely directed to his own advantage; and those attachments and disgusts, which have least apparent connexion with sinister motives, can be shown, in a multitude of instances, to result from no higher source than self-love. Thus our family, our neighbourhood, our church, our country, may be loved intensely and with a disposition to make personal sacrifices for their welfare, merely because they are ours; as

we may be ready to forego some pleasures, for the sake of others which we deem more valuable, or from regard to the permanent advancement of our interests. A complete evidence that self-preference is, after all, the master-passion, is found in the fact, that the utmost strength of natural affection, and of constitutional or acquired tenderness, may be overcome by selfish claims of an opposite character: the calls of appetite and passion will make the affectionate father reckless of the wants and miseries of his children; a sense of injury will extinguish every emotion of kindness in a friend, and rally, for the fearful onset of revenge, those very sensibilities which had loved, and wept, and consoled, and comforted. Indeed, the more popular philosophy has maintained it as a principle, that ultimate regard to self is the grand law of our being, whence originate all the virtues, as well as all the moral disorders, of our species; and the very notion of disinterested goodness has been ridiculed, as the perfection of extravagance and folly. If it be so, love to God, regarded in the high character of the Legislator, Judge, and Sovereign of the universe, is impossible. He clearly does not act with ultimate reference to the good of individuals, separate from the general system; his beneficence, in particular cases, is regulated and restrained by his respect to the higher demands of universal being; and it is his revealed purpose to sacrifice all that is dear to the incorrigible sinner's heart, in subserviency to the great ends of public justice, the honour of the Godhead, and the

lasting security, the ever growing triumphs, of the kingdom of righteousness. It is the unchangeable determination of Jehovah, that rebels shall repent, and submit to his merciful proposals in the gospel, or eternally perish ; and he, moreover, asserts it as his right, to select whom he pleases for holiness and heaven, and leave whom he will to the hopeless consequences of their own guilty choice. Against requisitions and facts like these, selfishness rises, exasperated and alarmed. All its fond complacency in a goodness, which it imagined to be bent, with immutable energy, toward the accomplishment of its wishes, is turned into implacable hate against a power, resolved to frustrate all its sordid designs, and scatter its most cherished hopes to the winds. It can love nothing, it can repose on nothing, which is not believed to secure to itself the peculiar gratifications it covets. In the same proportion as it sees its plans thwarted, itself condemned, and exposed to endless wretchedness, its enmity is roused against the Being by whom its punishment has been decreed. It is the very nature of selfishness to aim at the subjection of all beings and events to its will, and to resist, with its whole moral and physical force, whatever opposes its favourite objects. As the impenitence of the sinner is sustained by all the feelings and the full choice of his soul, and as his happiness, while he continues impenitent, is rendered impossible by all the maxims of the divine government, so he will not fail to cherish the strongest aversion to those maxims, and consequently

a profound and determined dislike of the glorious character of their Author.

2. The enmity of the human heart against God is manifest from *the erroneous and preposterous views*, which have been commonly entertained by mankind, respecting his character and government.

Look first at those destitute of the light of revelation. Nature itself affords evidence, sufficient to satisfy every candid and pure mind, of the existence of one invisible, almighty, and all-wise Creator; this is commonly admitted, and even strenuously maintained, though with no friendly design toward revealed religion, by deists themselves; and it is most plainly affirmed in the scriptures: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being." It is also to be recollected, that God originally revealed himself to the human race; and that traditional traces of his supernatural communications to mankind have been preserved, with different degrees of distinctness, among all nations. Under all these advantages, united often with all that is ennobling in

science, and splendid in the exertions of genius, what, we are prompted to ask, have been the advances of the human mind in the knowledge of the common Father and Benefactor of men? What researches has it made in the regions of that truly divine philosophy, which unfolds the attributes of the Eternal Source of existence and felicity, and determines the relations and duties of creatures to their God? Truly we might have anticipated some glorious discoveries, some ethereal visions, embodied in lasting forms of truth and beauty, and fit almost to be associated with the purified conceptions of angelic spirits; a worship, at once humble and elevated; and a standard of morals, captivating all hearts, like that holy code which attracts, and binds, in indissoluble love and blessedness, the cherubim and seraphim in the upper temple. But what is the testimony of facts on this subject? It is plain, from all history and observation, that mankind have no disposition to employ to any good purpose the means they enjoy for the acquisition of divine knowledge; they have shut their eyes against that light which their Maker has poured around them, have closed their ears against that voice of majesty and love which breaks forth from all his works, and have exalted senseless shapes, ideal beings, equally odious and contemptible, to the honours due only to Him who made and governs the universe. The profoundest disquisitions of the schools have left the human mind shackled with all the fetters of superstition, or, releasing it from vulgar

error, have conducted its rash descent into the realms of universal doubt or cheerless atheism. Not a single philosopher has known God, or, knowing him, has had the magnanimity to direct the erring steps of men to the footstool of his mercy. Speculative "gorgons, hydras, and chimeras dire," have haunted the groves of wisdom and the hill of science, no less than the abodes of unlettered, savage ignorance. The religious rites of the great body of mankind have been degrading and impious, as the objects of their religious veneration were impure and cruel. It is not possible to account for this universal propensity to the most disgusting superstition—this agreement among the learned and the unlearned to elevate stocks, and stones, and devils, to the throne of the Almighty, while his authority and his goodness are alike contemned—on any other supposition than that of an utter aversion, in the unsanctified human heart, to his character and worship. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, being filled with all unrighteousness."

Look next at those, who sit under the sunshine of the gospel. Do we not observe among nominal christians a strong tendency to error and infidelity? To say nothing of the direct attacks, which have often been made by the press, on christianity and its institutions, it cannot be forgotten, that comparatively little of the popular literature of the world is free from the infection of a loose theology and practical unbelief. The very

champions of revelation have not seldom been found among the most decided adversaries of evangelical doctrines ; talents, station, rank, and influence, even when affecting respect for the gospel, have too generally condescended to array themselves against all which it contains, humbling to the pride of man and honourable to God. The endless diversities of opinion, among those who bear the christian name, have furnished infidels with one of their most vaunted arguments against all religion, and have proved conclusively, either that the bible is too unintelligible to be of divine origin, or that it is criminally neglected, or that the hearts of men are averse to the admission of its grand peculiarities. And what is the fact ? Does error spring from deficiency of evidence ? Is there not, in the arguments by which the scriptures are proved to be divine, a variety, an amplitude, adapted to carry conviction to every mind, not stupified by passion, or rendered impenetrable by prejudice ? They never have been, they never can be, undermined or shaken. And as it regards the general features of the system, which the bible has inculcated, is it not a reflection on the wisdom of him from whom it emanated, and subversive of the very design of its promulgation, to say that it cannot be satisfactorily ascertained, by any diligence of research, united with candour of mind, and purity of moral feeling ? Radical error, in one who applies himself to the study of the sacred records, cannot arise from any want of perspicuity in them, but must be the offspring of a heart

hostile to that Being, who has impressed upon the gospel the image and superscription of his own glory. The conclusion cannot be evaded, but by assuming at once all the monstrous dogmas of infidelity. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil *hateth* the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

3. *The general conduct of mankind* with respect to God, as well as their love of error in religion, proves the enmity of their hearts against him.

Our weakness, our dependence, our common mercies, our religious privileges, and all the circumstances of our earthly existence, conspire to press upon our notice his perfections, and the reasonableness of a perpetual acknowledgment of him as our Supreme Benefactor. How is it possible to be unmindful of his universal presence and sustaining power? Possible surely it would not be, did there remain within us one filial sentiment toward God. What then must be the conclusion, concerning the actual dispositions of mankind? We know, for all we witness assures us of the fact, that the inspired description is not overdrawn, "God is not in all *their* thoughts." Every trifle can engross the mind; but a place within it can scarcely be found for high and holy musings on the adorable attributes of him by whom it was made. He displays his glory, he speaks in the whispers of his mercy, and in the awful

thunders of his displeasure ; yet man, obdurate and infatuated, sees not, hears not, relents not. The scriptures are neglected, or read only as the record of curious facts, a fit subject for the exercise of critical skill, with a disregard of practical results which would be blameable in a student of Cicero, or with the fierceness of a controversial spirit, which tramples on all authorities that would impede its march, and wrests the very testimony of God to the subversion of itself and the fundamental principles of his government. Fervent prayer is odious ; and often, where devotion is pretended, it is but a lifeless form, a mere charm against the fierce irruptions of a restless conscience. The general reluctance which is felt to spiritual duties is unaccountable, if there be no repugnancy in the human heart to intimate communion with God. By no other means is he brought so sensibly near : we come as to the very foot of his throne ; his majesty awes, his holiness subdues, his fatherly love in Christ attracts and melts, the soul. But surely none other than an enemy can dread a conscious nearness to the Fountain of all good. Friendship instinctively chooses vicinity to its object ; dislike alone can seek its gratification in reserve and distance.

Do we not observe every where, among impenitent men, a disregard and resistance of the authority of God ? While they perform many outward actions, which are conformable to the requisitions of his law, it is apparent, from the partiality of their obedience, that they do nothing in the spirit of his dutiful

subjects. Though they treat with visible consideration some of the commandments of God, they pay no regard to others ; thus making it manifest, that, in the good works of which they boast, they are actuated by motives of personal convenience, or self-interest, and not by any respect for his will and glory. “ Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ;” he proves himself to be wholly destitute of that temper which excites to all obedience ; and he is, of course, entitled to no praise for the seeming virtues which policy or accident may dispose him to assume. The same disposition which leads to the neglect of one divine precept, would, under circumstances of sufficient temptation, instigate to the open and profane contempt of all the commandments in the decalogue. True obedience is always rendered in view of obligation to him who promulgates the law ; and consequently it can claim no preference, no exemptions, in reference to any articles in the code. . The parent expects that his children will yield to his will, because it is *his* ; and he allows them no credit, as supporters of his government, merely on account of an occasional and undesigned coincidence, in their conduct, with the regulations he has established. What the law of God requires, is the absolute surrender of the heart to his guidance and control ; the consecration to his service of all our affections and powers ; an unwavering adherence, evinced in every thought and action, through all the periods of our existence. It makes no allow-

ance for disinclination ; it threatens the smallest delinquency with the pains of eternal death. To the generality of mankind this view of the law is all repulsive. It provokes their strongest objections; it arms them with pleas and apologies innumerable ; it invests, to their prejudiced eye, the whole character of God in terror and gloom. But a dislike of the law, in its spirituality and strictness, involves opposition to him by whom it was given, and of whose moral purity it is a transcript. Accordingly the apostle says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God ; neither indeed can be." Obedience is constantly declared to be the natural expression, and necessary consequence, of love. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you?" *Sinners are enemies to God by wicked works.*

All the principles of the divine government, as well as the law of God, are opposed by wicked men. His high prerogatives excite distrust and apprehension. To please the unholy he must abandon his sceptre, or rule only for their benefit. He must have no election, no decrees, no sovereignty. But whence this suspicion of his motives, this unwillingness to resign all events to his wise and benevolent disposal ? Can the loud complaints we often hear of those doctrines by which his supremacy is most clearly evinced, originate from any other source than enmity to the objects for which he created and manages the world ? And what is this

but enmity against God? Affectionate confidence in his power and goodness would delight to ascribe to him unlimited dominion; and especially would it feel no misgivings, no burning jealousies, at such an ascription.

How can we account for the treatment which the messengers of the Lord have in all ages received from an ungodly world, unless it be true, that there is in the minds of men, naturally, a strong aversion to pure religion, and consequently enmity against that God from whom it proceeds? To resolve the hostility manifested against inspired teachers into the peculiar circumstances and prejudices of the respective times in which they lived, is altogether gratuitous, at variance alike with the record of facts, and, as it seems to me, with the exposition given by the subject in the sacred volume. The scriptures exhibit a concise narrative of events, embracing several thousand years; and it does not appear that during all that period a single prophet, remarkable for his zeal and usefulness, was exempt from reproach and persecution. Strange that the circumstances of the age should always have been such as to exasperate the pride and vindictive feelings of the unholy against the best of men, provided that these circumstances, instead of being accidental, did not arise from some inherent depravity, some rooted enmity against God, in the moral affections of human nature itself. The uniformity of an effect amidst all the changes which centuries produce in the opinions and

usages of mankind, proves, if any thing can prove, some permanent cause beyond the influence of such revolutions. Besides, we are expressly taught that the world (a term, including all unbelievers of whatever time, or nation) is constantly, essentially, an enemy to that church which Jesus purchased by his blood. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the *world hateth* you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. The *world hath hated them*, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus," says the apostle, "shall suffer persecution." From these and many other passages, it is evident that the hatred that has been excited against the servants of Christ, has had its origin in those fixed principles of corruption which are common to all unconverted men. And will it, can it, be pretended, that a persecution of the children of God, merely for their fidelity to his cause, implies no unfriendly dispositions towards the Master whom they serve? Unkindness to an ambassador, who acts simply in accordance with his instructions, is universally accounted an insult to the court from which he derived his commission. Indignity to a son, because he belongs to his father, and bears his image, is the most unequivocal proof and expression of ill will to the father himself.

How has Jesus Christ been treated by sinners? He, it is to be remembered, is God as well as man; and, therefore, any disrespect manifested towards him is to be considered as a direct expression of the feelings of the heart towards God. No teacher was ever so violently hated, vilified, and persecuted, as the meek, merciful, and charitable Saviour of the world. So vehement and invincible was the resentment of sinners against him, that they could not be satisfied, till they had imbrued their hands in his blood; and no thanks to them, that the Divinity within him did not expire, with the human body which it inhabited. It was then a mortal enmity, which was borne by the unbelieving Jews against God manifest in the flesh. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise." As Jesus is exalted beyond the reach of sinners, they, of course, despair of another triumph in his actual crucifixion; yet they exhibit, as means and opportunities occur, the same hostility which was manifested by his betrayers and murderers. By many he is openly blasphemed; and, by all the impenitent, his messages of mercy are rejected, and the figments of their own righteousness substituted for his all-sufficient sacrifice and obedience. The obvious language of unbelief is, "Away with him; we will not have this man to reign over us." Such a spirit is an implicit rejection of the dominion and grace, not of the Son merely, but of the whole Godhead. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

4. Many will testify, from *their own experience*, to the native enmity of their hearts against God. These were once as unwilling as any others to ascribe to themselves so depraved a character ; living in careless ease, and neglecting every spiritual duty, it was scarcely possible to convince them that they indulged a latent opposition to their Maker ; they boasted of their virtues and imaginary complacency in his government, and supposed, that no radical change in their dispositions was requisite, to prepare them for the enjoyment of his kingdom. Some alteration of circumstances, a spirit of more sober reflection, or some internal operation of grace, disclosing to their view the secret springs of action, annihilated all their fond notions of their own goodness, and exhibited them *to themselves*, the undisguised, implacable enemies of God. Every real christian is ready to charge himself with direct rebellion—to own that, naturally, he carried in his bosom such sentiments and feelings as, but for restraining grace, would have prompted him to all the acts of the most determined enmity. However good men may differ in other respects, in the admission of that entire moral corruption which involves opposition to the perfections and administration of Jehovah, they are all agreed ; and their conviction on this subject acquires strength and permanency, in proportion to their advances in knowledge and holiness. And is this universal consent of such as are most deeply imbued with spiritual christianity, and have noticed most faithfully the interior

actings of their depravity, to be accounted nothing? That they practise *intentional deception* will not be pretended; and how can it be believed, that on a point where they appeal for proof to personal experience, and which implies nothing less than their own shame and condemnation, they are all *deceived*? To some of them, at least, strength of understanding, and, on all other subjects, perspicuity of judgment, must be conceded; and why should they be charged with fanatical delusion in this concurrent testimony of their individual consciousness?

See an awakened sinner. Tortured by a discovery of his guilt and danger, vainly striving to procure some respite from his woes, he still resists the gracious invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." His whole conduct evinces a steadfast opposition to the terms of salvation; this occasions all his inward agony, all those prayers and tears by which, without submission, he would avert his impending doom. Submission would free him at once from the terrors, which haunt all his paths, would secure to his now trembling soul, the forgiving mercy, the everlasting favour, of God. Why then is the sinner thus disquieted? Many are conscious of the real source of their wretchedness; and this, perhaps, is true of all, who, amidst a plenitude of evangelical light, have struggled hard and long under the bondage of servile fear and the stern rebukes of a violated law. All their fancied amiableness has vanished; they see, they

feel such stubbornness, such inward murmurs, such dissatisfaction with the government of God, as leave them not a doubt of the existence of a malignity within them, strong enough, were it armed with the power it covets, to subvert his very throne. Thousands, reputed most lovely in their natural temper, have felt the rising wish; a wish, which even a sense of their helplessness and the dread of Heaven's thunder could not quell. Ask them, if any language can be too forcible to express the extent of their opposition? And will it be contended, that they have false apprehensions of themselves; that, with all their sensible hatred of God, they are *at heart* his sincere friends? It might be so, were their eyes directed to an imaginary being; but it is the God of the bible, holy, just, and sovereign, whose character excites their aversion, and from whose presence they shrink with horror and dismay. They labour under no mistake—unless, indeed, sin be a trifle, fear of damnation the whim of a disordered intellect, and the doctrine of responsibility to him that made us, a fable and a dream.

5. *The scriptures* have settled the question.

Observe the express testimony of the bible. "Ye have both *seen* and *hated* both me and my Father. Ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and *ye*

would not. For if while we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son—And you that were sometime alienated, and *enemies* in your mind by wicked works”—

Deny the native enmity of the heart to God, and the leading doctrines of the gospel become wholly unintelligible. What will you make of regeneration? “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Believers are declared to be “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;” they have known experimentally *the exceeding greatness of his power* in their renovation, *according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.* Means and motives, important as they are in the economy of grace, have, we are assured, no efficiency in the production of that moral change without which none will embrace the offers, or become interested in the blessings, of salvation. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” What, but such opposition in the unrenewed heart to the gospel, and consequently to God, its Author, as is invincible by argument and all the exertions of finite power, could justify language like this?

How do you explain the sovereignty of the divine purposes in reference to the vessels of mercy? “Ye have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and or

dained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not ; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." It seems, then, that sinners do not, *will not* move towards God, till he moves upon their hearts by his special grace. But would they, when invited to the heavenly banquet which his mercy has prepared, "all begin, with one consent, to make excuse"—did they feel no disgust at the provisions—did they cherish no disloyalty towards the King, at whose expense the provisions had been procured? *Impossible!* Love, at the first summons of the gospel, would fly to the arms of the Father of mercies, and rest, with angelic calmness and rapture, in his bosom.

The message of the gospel to sinful men is summarily this: "Be ye reconciled to God." To explain, illustrate, and enforce this duty, wherever they went, was the grand object of the primitive preachers of christianity. But does not reconciliation import a previous state of variance between the parties? Who ever heard of an attempt to reconcile those who had always been friends? And to whom, in this case, is the exhortation given? To God? Is he entreated to be reconciled to sinners? They are required to become reconciled to God ; the aggression and enmity, then, are on their side. He can make no concessions, no alteration in the great maxims of his government : if any change is to be ef-

fectcd in the relations subsisting between himself and sinners, it must be accomplished by their voluntary compliance with the proposals, which he has already announced.

Such is the whole tenor of the gospel. Let it be made to appear—that impenitent men are in any degree truly friendly to God,—and none are in danger of perdition,—and the whole scheme of salvation by grace is overthrown. All who are not the friends of God are his enemies. There can be no neutrality here. “He that is not for me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

Such are the proofs of the enmity of the unrenewed heart of man against his Creator, Supreme Benefactor, and Eternal Judge.

This humiliating subject, my brethren, teaches us most impressively the importance of those restraints, which a wise and benevolent Providence is pleased to employ in the government of mankind. Conceive of all restraints withdrawn from a world like this ;—a world accursed, and full of the enemies of God. No tongue can describe, no fancy can paint, the complicated scenes of guilt and misery which would ensue. The malice, blasphemies, fierce upbraidings, and ceaseless contentions of the place of the damned, would every where suspend the labours of industry, the pleasures of knowledge, the tranquil joys of domestic life, the protection of law, the smiles of liberty, and all the sweet, buoyant, enduring hopes which religion inspires.

Every temple, dedicated to the living God, would fall, or be transformed into a den of assassins and cannibals; every bible would be trodden into the dust, or thrown into the flames; every useful volume, every useful art, would perish; and atheism, and war, and carnage, and desolation, swell the tide of misery, till all vestiges of guilty and reprobated man were swept from the face of the earth. No praise to us, that all these horrors, and others too dreadful for our conception, are not already realized. To him who holds in his fist the wild winds, and the wilder passions of his enemies, be all the glory. "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou *restrain*."

What views does this subject give us of the mysterious love of God to our apostate world? Regarded in its boundless variety and ceaseless manifestations, his kindness to his friends and to irrational creatures incapable of transgression, illustrates, in a manner eminently wonderful and affecting, the benevolence whence all his bounties flow. But it is when we contemplate this great Legislator and Father bestowing his benefits on sinners, on his enemies; upholding their life; imparting to them ease, health, competency; instructing them by his works; reasoning with them by his word; sending out his commands and invitations, and

promises ; and, more than all, giving his own Son for their redemption ; *that we begin to learn what infinite love can do.* Intent on the happiness of men, he beseeches them to become reconciled to himself ; and as they continue to reject his mercy, he repeats, with renewed earnestness, his paternal entreaties. To this urgency, he adds, in behalf of his chosen, the special exertion of his own power, to subdue their enmity ; he draws them with cords of a man, with bands of love ; he justifies them freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus ; sustains them amidst all the perils of their journey ; and receives them at last into his immediate presence, where their obedience, gratitude, and praise, are perfect and eternal. And all this for those, who were by nature his enemies, and children of wrath ! O goodness past finding out ! an ocean without bottom or shore !

My impenitent hearers, this is the God against whom you have rebelled. Again you are called to repent : “ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” On what principle, will you attempt to justify your enmity against the Lord of heaven and earth ? On what principle, will you undertake to excuse your present impenitence, your obstinate resistance of all those affecting mandates, which issue from his throne in heaven, from Sinai’s summit, and from the bloody tree of Calvary ? Is not God worthy of your love, your confidence, your obedi-

ence, your eternal praise? Is he not the sum and pattern of all beauty; an immensity of glory before which the lustre of the whole creation fades away, and is forgotten? Do not all possible perfections centre in him, with a harmony, and grandeur, and boundlessness, which should astonish and overwhelm, and ravish, all hearts, in all worlds? What then is his offence? Is it, that he has made you rational, immortal, and subjects of his holy government; that, forbearing to punish hitherto, he has crowned your days with his mercy; that he has given his Son to be a propitiation for your sins, sent you his word, forewarned you of the punishment you have deserved, declared his readiness to forgive, and is now urging your return to himself by the bleeding sacrifice of the cross? Is it for all these things, or any of them, that you harbour so deep a resentment against him? Is it for these, that you are so determined on a rejection of his kind overtures? Do you plead inability? *What is your inability?* Are you deficient in natural faculties? Are you incapable of reasoning, of knowing your duty, of exercising love, and of acting freely in view of motives? Is your helplessness any thing else than disinclination; a heart, supremely devoted to enjoyments, foreign from the glory of God and the interests of his holy kingdom? Is such inability, such helplessness, the apology you offer for unyielding opposition to God? It is that which constitutes your sin itself; it is that for which you will stand at last, condemned, speechless, at the tribunal of eternal

justice. Down—down then with your weapons of rebellion. God is in the right. He has done nothing, said nothing, on which you can rest your defence. His law, his gospel, all intelligent creatures, and your own consciences also, will rise as swift witnesses against you, will vindicate the insulted honour, and justify the righteous sentence, of the King of kings.

Dear fellow-mortals, what do you intend? Would you perpetuate the war with the Almighty? Pause, before you form so dreadful a resolution. It is no light design, in which you are engaged. Every enemy of God carries in his bosom a spirit, which, acting out itself with a potency of influence, proportioned to the intensity and energy of its malice, would do more than desolate the earth, and hang the heavens in sackcloth, and extinguish stars and suns, and crumble the thrones of celestial potentates;—it would blot out the source of all being, or degrade to the occupation of a servile instrumentality to its own caprice, all the wisdom and power of the infinite Jehovah. Yes, it is a spirit which breathes extermination against the kingdom, and attributes, and very existence of God. But it is impotent as it is daring. The sinner cannot dethrone his Maker; and he must be miserable while God continues to reign. The elements of perdition, now perhaps smothered in his breast, will one day glow, and kindle, and blaze forth in all their fury. The bursting of his earthly tenement will but introduce him to scenes, every one of which will awaken within him unutterable anguish. Those

holy eyes, of which he is now unmindful, he will then see fixed upon him in all their penetrating and insufferable radiance, darting through his whole soul pangs, of which on earth he had never dreamed. God, in all the brightness of his purity, in all the majesty of his dominion, in all the resistlessness of his might, will encompass, confound, overwhelm him. Who will espouse his cause? In paradise itself, he would be worse than solitary. What, at the sight of an enemy of God breaking in upon their joys, would be the emotions of the heavenly worshippers? No ransomed spirit, no angel, greets his arrival; every harp is silent, every song is suspended; the whole population start back, at his approach, with involuntary horror, or unite to expel the bold intruder from the realms of the blessed. And whither will he go?—No place for him, but the abodes of darkness and despair; no companions, but fiends, his associates in crime, who will be his tormentors forever.

Dying hearer, dying hearer! it is now with you the day of grace. The voice of the Redeemer's mercy sounds from Calvary. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Come now, and taste, for the first time, the joys of reconciliation to God. To-morrow it may be too late. Yield now to the importunities of divine compassion; seize this golden moment of probation and hope. Then shal

your offended Sovereign smile, and the gates of heaven shall be thrown open, and strains of gratulation roll from the skies: "THE ENEMY HAS BECOME A FRIEND, THE CHILD OF PERDITION, AN HEIR OF GLORY."

DISCOURSE VI.

THE REJECTION OF REVEALED TRUTH REFERABLE TO MORAL DEPRAVITY.

HEBREWS iii. 12.—“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

It has been often and strenuously objected to the religion of Jesus Christ, that it lays a most unreasonable stress on *faith*; that it even makes our entire interest in all the blessings which it proposes, to be suspended upon the exercise of this grace. But another principle in the christian system, still more offensive, and still more strenuously opposed, is, that the want of faith is always represented as a *sin*, and, of course, as referable to the depravity of the heart.

This, however, is the uniform doctrine of the Bible; and it is plainly taught in our text. The Apostle is, indeed, here writing to those whom he calls “brethren,” that is, professed believers in Christ. Even these were

in danger of unbelief: for unbelief may be either speculative or practical, partial or entire. But in whatever degree or form it may exist; whether in the decent professor, or in the profane scoffer; whether in that weak faith which "staggers at the promise," or that decisive and bold infidelity, which entirely rejects "the record which God has given of his Son;"—it is always criminal, always referable to an *evil heart*, against which every well-wisher to the happiness of man ought to be on his guard.

Although the remarks which I am about to offer, may be considered as referring, as far as they are applicable, to every grade of unbelief, whether in the real christian, or the impenitent sinner,—and which, as was just said, is referable, in *all*, to an evil source; yet my main purpose is to speak of that "unbelief" which is speculative and entire, that is, which rejects the Bible, rejects the religion of Jesus Christ as a "cunningly devised fable;" and to shew that this unbelief ever flows from an "evil heart;" in other words, is always the result of moral depravity.

I am perfectly aware, my friends, that this will be considered by many as a most uncharitable and offensive charge. Yet I am not without hope that it may be substantiated to the satisfaction of every impartial hearer. There may, indeed, be some cavil as to the question, what is evil? For there are multitudes who "call evil good, and good evil." What, then, ought to be denominated *evil*? Now, I shall feel warranted in

pronouncing to be such, every thing that leads men to "depart from the living God;" every thing which disposes them to make light of his character, authority and law; every thing that tends to diminish the abhorrence of vice, or to take away the incentives to virtue; every thing, in a word, that leads to moral corruption and misery.

It is my purpose, then, to endeavour to shew, that unbelief in God's Bible; unbelief in Jesus Christ, and in that great system of revealed truth, which is the subject matter of the Bible, must flow from an "*evil heart*;"—that unbelief is evil in its NATURE, evil in its ORIGIN, and evil in its EFFECTS.

I. Unbelief in the revelation of Jesus Christ is EVIL IN ITS NATURE.

And here, that we may understand the real, intrinsic character of unbelief, let us attend, for a moment, to that opposite act of the mind which we call *believing*;—*believing the Gospel*. This is the more necessary, because many are fond of considering and representing it as a mere intellectual exercise, in which we simply assent to evidence, and for which we are no more accountable than in yielding our assent to any other kind of evidence. For, say they, as we never consider a man as morally guilty for not being convinced by the evidence presented in favour of a given theorem in mathematics, or syllogism in logic, any more than for not seeing an object beyond the reach of his organs of vision; so neither ought any one to be

held responsible, either to God or man, for not being convinced by the testimony in favour of the Gospel ; and, of course, for not receiving it as the foundation of his hope, and the guide of his life. If this representation were correct, it would certainly be difficult to shew that unbelief has any moral evil in its nature.

There are others—and those who bear the christian name—who, though they by no means admit that evangelical belief is a mere assent of the understanding to an array of testimony ;—yet maintain, that he is a believer, in the Gospel sense, who cherishes a firm persuasion that he is himself a christian ; that Christ died for him in particular ; and that he is an object of the Divine love. Now, as a strong confidence of this kind may be supposed to exist, and has often, in fact, been found to exist, without any real subjection of the heart to the spirit of christianity ;—it would not be easy, it must be acknowledged,—on the supposition that faith essentially consists in confidence in our own good estate, and the essence of unbelief in doubt concerning it,—to shew that unbelief is intrinsically sinful ;—in other words, to establish the doctrine of our text.

But I need not say to those who read and understand the Scriptures, that neither of these views can, by any means, be admitted. Faith, or believing, is every where represented, by the inspired writers, as an humble, reverential, cordial reception of Jehovah's testimony, that is, of his revealed truth. It is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

with the bodily eye. It is that mental exercise, by which the existence, perfections, government and Gospel of Jehovah are made realities to our minds, and respected accordingly; by which we meditate on his glory, converse with him, and take an affectionate interest in his kingdom and honour. It is evident, then, on the slightest examination, that the faith which is exercised in embracing the religion of Christ, is eminently a moral act. "With the heart," we are told, "man believeth unto righteousness." The Gospel comes to us, not as a system of frigid speculation; but as a great moral and practical message; a message of wonderful love and mercy. It addresses us as a race of rebels, alienated from God, and under the condemning sentence of his righteous law. It offers to us pardon and peace, complete deliverance from the guilt, the power and the consequences of sin, and a title to eternal life; and all this on the simple and easy terms, that we feel our need of these blessings, and humbly and gratefully accept of them, as a free gift, bestowed solely for the sake of the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Redeemer. Now, evangelical faith is, in one word, this humble and grateful acceptance of the Gospel offer. It is receiving the holy, self-denying joyful truth of the Bible IN THE LOVE OF IT. It is that combined act of the understanding, will, and affections, by which we cordially embrace the whole religion of Jesus Christ as a practical system; by which we unfeignedly accept of the Saviour as our Teacher.

our atoning Sacrifice, our vicarious Righteousness, our Lawgiver, and our Pattern. In short, the essential nature of faith consists in an unreserved and hearty surrender of the whole mind to the *information* which the Gospel brings, to the *grace* which it unfolds, and to the *duties* which it enjoins. It is that act, or rather that practical habit of the soul, by which we renounce our pride, our prejudices, and our self-righteousness; by which we sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, and learn his humbling and self-denying lessons. This is faith. This is that precious grace which may well hold so high a rank in the christian system; for it is that by which we apprehend, and practically regard all the glories of the unseen world. It is that grace by which, if I may be allowed the expression, we take hold of Christ as our hope; take hold of eternal things as our richest treasures; take hold of the character, the law, and the gracious covenant of Jehovah, as our confidence, and rest, and joy.

Hence christian faith is often spoken of in Scripture in terms which imply the exercise of *moral feeling*, as well as *intellectual assent*. It is represented, by the Apostle, as "receiving *the love of the truth*." In the parable of the "sower," the "good ground," in which the seed was deposited with profit, is said, by our Saviour, to indicate those who receive the seed of his word "into *good and honest hearts*." Again, it is said, by the inspired Apostle, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe *in thine heart* that

God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This grace is also illustrated, by our Saviour, by comparing it with the meek, humble, teachable temper of "a little child." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."^{*}

Now, if such be the nature of faith, then the want of it, which is "unbelief," must be evil, exceedingly evil, in its very nature. Unbelief is the direct opposite of faith. It rejects the glorious Gospel; turns away with indifference, or with aversion, from its condescending offers; opposes its Author; treats Him as a liar; and sets his promises and his threatenings equally at naught. Where there is no faith, the God of the Bible is not recognized or regarded, and, of course, neither loved nor obeyed. In fact, as belief in the great realities which the Bible unfolds, is the vital principle of all piety, without which neither the great Object of worship, nor the duties which we owe Him, can be contemplated as real, or exert an influence on the mind; so unbelief is no less the vital principle of all irreligion, and all disobedience. Its very spirit and essence, as our text intimates, consists in "departing from the living God;" renouncing his authority; despising his word; refusing to listen to his kindest invitations; and practically defying his power and wrath.

^{*} 2 Thess. ii. 10. Luke viii. 15. Rom: x. 9, 10. Matt. xviii. 3.

Unbelief, then, my friends, is not a mere error in judgment ; a mere miscalculation of the amount and force of testimony :—but a state of the mind, strongly marked with moral obliquity ; a state of the heart involving disobedience to God ; aversion to his truth ; neglect of his most gracious annunciations ; ingratitude for his richest mercies ; and taking side with his worst enemies. Only assume that the Gospel is a true, and a gracious gift of God, and all that has been stated inevitably follows. And is not the heart that is capable of all this, an “evil heart ;”—a rebellious heart ;—a hard, ungrateful heart ? Yes, my dear brethren, unbelief is so far from being no sin, or a small sin, that it is the radical principle, the most noxious element of all sin. And if *all* unbelief be thus evil, how pre-eminently evil is that unbelief, which not only refuses to hear, and to yield assent when God speaks ; but which sets at naught *such a message* as the glorious Gospel ; a message of love and mercy, of peace and pardon and life ; a message which proclaims deliverance from all the evils which we feel or fear, and exaltation to bliss and glory eternal in the heavens ! O my friends, what immeasurable evil is here ! Surely those who refuse to listen when the God of grace speaks ; who turn away with thankless indifference from the wonders of redeeming love ; who voluntarily close their eyes against the light of life, and their ears against the invitations of heavenly mercy ; who, when addressed by all that is tender in condescension, and by all that is touching

and constraining in Divine entreaty, refuse to hear; refuse to be saved; deliberately prefer "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power" to an "incorruptible crown," an "undefiled inheritance," an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"—who practically say to the Saviour, "We will not accept of thine offered salvation; we will not have thee to reign over us;"—surely if there be "an evil heart" either on earth or in hell, THEY manifest it, in all the deformity which ingratitude and rebellion can impress upon the spirit of a rational creature. Let us next

II. Proceed to show that the heart of unbelief is "an evil heart," by tracing this unhappy state of mind to some of its CHIEF CAUSES. That which is always and essentially evil in its NATURE, cannot be imagined to have any other than an evil SOURCE. Yet it may not be unprofitable, in contemplating the subject before us, to examine some of the SPECIFIC CAUSES which lead to that rejection of the glorious Gospel of which we speak, and which shew it to be as unhallowed in its *origin*, as in its *character*.

And, on this point, the word of God is clear and decisive. It uniformly traces unbelief, in all its forms, to a corrupt source. It represents it as generated and nourished by pride, by prejudice, by unhallowed appetite and passion, by corrupt habits of living, by a desire to be free from all the restraints which the faith of the Gospel imposes. It pronounces with the utmost solemnity and emphasis—"This is the condemnation,

that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And again; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And again; "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." Once more; "He that is of God," said the Saviour, "heareth God's words: ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God;" that is, have not the spirit or the holy image of God.*

There is, perhaps, nothing of more familiar occurrence, in every walk of life, than the fact, that the reception which men give to truth, of any kind, is very much governed by their *feelings*, their *predilections*, their *propensities*, their *prejudices*. The ardent politician, the bigotted ecclesiastical sectary, the pledged philosophical partizan, can easily resist the force even of demonstration itself, when it contravenes the wishes and the interests of their respective parties. Nay, scarcely can the evidence of his own senses overcome the blind prejudice of one who is predisposed and predetermined not to admit an unwelcome truth. Now, the operation of this principle is not only discernible, but it is manifested with peculiar frequency and force

* John iii. 19. 1 Corinthians ii. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. John viii: 47.

in the province of religion. We may imagine a thousand mathematical, philosophical, or other speculative questions, in solving which our minds may be said to be entirely *impartial*. Because the solution of them, in one way or another, can shock none of our prejudices, thwart none of our passions, interfere with none of our pleasures, dethrone none of our idols. But not so with the question, whether the religion of the Bible "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance?" Perhaps it is not going too far to say, that the pure doctrines and spirit of the Gospel are more irreconcilably opposed to the natural feelings and spirit of fallen man, than any thing else that ever came from the Author of all good. The large demand which genuine, undefiled Christianity makes on the submission of the understanding to sublime mysteries; the humiliating estimate which it presents of the moral condition of man; the abasing method of approach to God, and of acceptance with him, which it announces; the mighty transformation of the desires, affections, and habits of the soul which it requires; and the humility, self-denial, penitence, and habitual separation from the spirit, maxims, and practices of the world which it calls upon those who receive it to exercise;—these are all as diametrically opposed as can well be imagined to the taste of the unrenewed heart. They are "hard sayings," which many cannot and will not "bear." Is it wonderful, then, that, with this native and strong bias against the Gospel, its entire rejection, in speculation as

well as in practice, should be an event of frequent occurrence? If the account which the scriptures give of human nature be true, the existence of this corrupt bias is unquestionable. And if it exist, then it must be the grand source of all infidelity. In vain are the evidences of Christianity, in all their extent and power, set in array before a mind under the governing influence of this hostile feeling. Miracles, prophecy, and all the external and internal testimony which the Gospel has to offer in its own favour, are lost upon such a mind. Nay, even when the difficulties of unbelief are palpably made to appear greater, far greater, than those of faith; still he is not convinced. Every thing is seen with a jaundiced eye. Testimony of the most weighty and powerful kind becomes light as air, when thrown into the scale against rooted prejudice, and strong inclination.

I am aware that unbelievers are commonly fond of representing their opinions as derived from *reason*; as the offspring of free and candid *inquiry*. But did you ever know an individual of this class, who really was in the habit of seriously studying the Bible, or who appeared at all disposed to make either the evidences or the doctrines of Christianity the object of close and earnest examination? Did you ever know an infidel who seemed to become such by serious investigation; by sober argument; by carefully weighing the testimony which the word of God presents in favour of its heavenly origin? I will venture to say, you never did. No; when men become Christians—I mean intelligent

and genuine Christians ;—the only class of which the Bible knows any thing ;—they become such, under the Divine blessing, by means of serious thought and consideration ; by anxious inquiry ; by earnest prayer. But men commonly become infidels by ignorance, by thoughtlessness, by pride, by prejudice, by turning away their minds from the Bible, and from all sober inquiry ; by forgetting God ; and by flying from all appropriate reflection on his character, and the claims which he asserts on his rational creatures. They are not willing to cherish the affections, and to perform the duties which Christianity requires, and, therefore, they are not willing to believe its doctrines ; and can scarcely be prevailed upon to read the smallest manual, or to listen to a single serious conversation, intended for their defence.

Perhaps it will be asked, then, whether we mean to assert that the votaries of unbelief are none of them *sincere* in their rejection of the Gospel ? If by the term *sincere* be meant, that they are not gross hypocrites ; but have really succeeded in persuading themselves that Christianity is a fable ; I am far from denying that some of them may be, in this sense, sincere. For “there is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” But is this the proper meaning of the word *sincere*, as found in scripture, and in the diction of all sound moral teachers ? By no means. By *sincerity* the Bible means genuine fairness and honesty of mind ; a cordial desire to know and obey the truth ; a spirit of

humble, candid, impartial inquiry ; a faithful use of the best means within our reach for ascertaining the truth. Now, if such real sincerity as this, be generally found in those who reject the religion of Jesus Christ, then all scripture, and all experience, must be abandoned as delusive in their testimony.

If the children of unbelief were really actuated by that spirit of candid inquiry, and rational conviction, which they claim ; can it be imagined that their manner of investigating and treating the religion of Jesus Christ, could be such as it too commonly is ? The great objects of contemplation and inquiry which this religion presents, are the most momentous and awful that can occupy the minds of rational beings. The character of God ; the relations which we bear to Him ; the method of acceptance with Him ; the service which he requires ; and the eternal destiny which awaits us ;—these are the mighty subjects which occupy the pages of the Christian's Bible. Now, is it possible to conceive of subjects which demand more grave and solemn consideration than these ? Can it be believed that levity, sneer, habitual ridicule, and profane scoffing become the discussion of matters so infinitely important ? Is it possible for those who are really candid and in earnest in their inquiries after truth, habitually to assail the Christian Revelation with such weapons ? Yet these are the weapons with which infidelity has been accustomed, in all ages, to assail the Gospel of Christ. If the annals of infidelity ever furnished an

instance of one who was disposed to treat Christianity with seriousness and respect; who read with unceasing diligence what has been written in its favour, as well as against it; who earnestly sought for Divine direction in his inquiries; and who habitually treated the whole subject as one of infinite moment;—I confess it is more than ever came to my knowledge. Now what, I ask, is the indication of such a fact? Is this a symptom of pure, or of corrupt origin? Surely when RELIGION is in question, a spirit of levity and profaneness is an evil spirit, if there be any distinction between right and wrong in the universe.

The same charge of unhallowed origin is still further established against the spirit of unbelief, by the undoubted fact, that while its votaries are unceasing and ardent in their efforts to draw those around them from the religion of Christ; they discover no serious desire either to practise themselves, or to inculcate on others, that which they profess to believe. The greater part of those who reject Christianity, profess to believe that there is a God, who made, and who governs the world; who will finally bring men to judgment; and who ought to be loved and worshipped. But does their professed creed appear to exert the smallest practical influence on their own lives? Was ever an infidel known either to be devoutly strict in *practising* the duties of natural religion himself, or to manifest any anxiety to *inculcate* those duties on his fellow-men? I never heard of such a case; and must be allowed to

doubt whether such a case ever existed. The inference is unavoidable. The spirit of infidelity, in discarding Revealed Religion, practically discards all religion. Its essential, characteristic spirit is that of utter impiety. It does not seriously regard what it professes to believe. Its ruling passion is to pull down, without building up. There is no system of principles to which it honestly and consistently adheres. Now can any thinking man doubt, for a moment, whence such a spirit derived its origin? It cannot possibly flow from any other than an evil source.

Another mark of the unhallowed origin of unbelief, is, that it is so often found unwilling to acknowledge itself; nay disposed meanly to deny its own existence, and perhaps hypocritically to profess an opposite character. A large majority of the most distinguished infidels who have lived within the last two hundred years, during the greater part of their lives denied their infidelity; wished to be thought Christians by the mass of society; and only to confidential friends were willing to avow their unbelief. Lord *Bolingbroke* professed himself a Christian; availed himself, as far as possible, of all the temporal advantages which such a profession could secure; and provided for the full disclosure of his real opinions, by committing to a needy profligate the publication of his writings after his death. The same cowardly and hypocritical course has been pursued by many others, and continues to mark the spirit of infidelity, in our own country, as well as elsewhere, up to the present time. Is it necessary, my friends, to bring

laboured proof that the origin of such a spirit is "evil?" When falshood, meanness, treachery and hypocrisy can be reconciled with manly virtue; when acting over again the conduct of *Judas Iscariot* can be commended to imitation;—then, and not till then, may such a spirit be pronounced honest and honourable.

Again; the *history* of the rise and progress of many of the most common cases of infidelity, plainly demonstrates that its source, no less than its nature, is evil. Thousands of the young, as well as of the aged, have been, manifestly, drawn into infidelity by their evil passions, and their vices. The history of many a youthful victim of unbelief, has been, in substance, as follows. He was taught, from the cradle, to reverence the Bible, and instructed, both by precept and example, to attach importance to the great sanctions which it unfolds. In the outset, and comparative innocence of his course, when his plans were sober, and his habits regular, the instructions of his youth exerted a commanding influence on his conscience. Heaven and hell were to him solemn realities; and, though not truly pious, he revered piety in others, and hoped, one day, to possess it himself. But, by and by, when he entered on the gay world; when false honour began to dazzle, and criminal pleasure to allure; when licentious habits gradually unfolded their attractions, and ungodly companions rendered him familiar with scenes of profaneness and vice;—he was not slow in perceiving that such pursuits were altogether inconsistent with the

principles of his education. This, at first, filled him with deep anxiety. The conflict, however, in its power, did not last long. He felt obliged either to abandon the principles of his youth, or to give up his unhallowed indulgences. He was resolved not to part with the latter; and, therefore, gave up the former. At first he hesitated; then he doubted, or rather tried to doubt; then he disbelieved:—not because he had examined, and found religion false; but because he had made it necessary, for his own peace of mind, to believe it false. He, at length, succeeded in persuading himself that all his former seriousness and scruples were idle dreams; that he might live as he listed without any fear of an hereafter;—until, in the end, he became prepared to take his stand with the most determined enemies of the Gospel, and even to “sit in the seat of the scornful.” Now, can any one doubt, that, in all such cases, unbelief is the offspring, not of sober inquiry, but of corrupt inclination; not of a sincere and candid search after truth; but of a desire to be liberated from the restraints which the religion of Christ imposes?

On the same principle, it has so often happened, to persons of more mature age, that when they were in plain and humble life, they professed to be serious believers in Christ, and appeared to be truly pious. But when they became rich; rose in station and consequence; and were surrounded with the means of luxurious indulgence, and fashionable living;—they not only declined in spirituality; but often abandoned their

old religious connections ;—and either attached themselves to some ecclesiastical body accustomed to allow greater laxity of life ; or, perhaps, still more frequently, fell into entire scepticism, and became openly regardless of all religion.

There is also, another fact, of very frequent occurrence, and strongly illustrative of the same great principle. We have all seen cases, in the buoyant season of health, prosperity and pleasure, when the tide of animal feeling ran high, and the splendour and fascinations of the world captivated the heart ;—we have seen infidelity, in such cases, triumphant. But when the scene was changed ; when the hour of deep affliction, or of death, arrived ; and when, of course, the illusions of appetite and ambition were in a great measure withdrawn ;—then the haughtiness, and even the confidence of unbelief were abandoned ; the Bible was no longer a despised book ; the minister of religion became a welcome visitant ; the voice of prayer was heard with deep interest ; and the Christian's God sought with intense earnestness of spirit. How, my friends, shall we account for facts like these ? The solution is neither remote nor questionable. That spirit which is generated and nourished by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ;" which always flourishes most in scenes of licentious pleasure ; and which generally dies, or loses its confidence at the approach of affliction and death, cannot be the product of either virtuous feeling, or sober inquiry. The

"heart of unbelief," then, is evil, deplorably evil in its origin. THE GOSPEL WOULD HAVE NO ENEMIES, IF IT WERE NOT THE ENEMY OF ALL SINFUL INDULGENCE.

But if the NATURE and the SOURCES of unbelief are "evil"—

III. No less evil are its EFFECTS.

Our blessed Saviour has taught us to judge of all moral professions and claims by this test. "Therefore," said He, "by their fruits shall ye know them." And it is a test as reasonable in its character, as it is Divine in its authority. For, as that tree which, in all cases, in every kind of soil, and under every mode of culture,—still brings forth evil fruit,—must, of course, be pronounced evil in its nature ; so that system of opinions, which is invariably found, in every variety of situation, to lead its votaries away from all that is good, both in temper and practice ; and to render them, if not openly profligate, at least strikingly defective in those virtues which form the essential elements of individual and social excellence ; and quite as strikingly prone to those vices which are destructive to all the most precious interests of men ;—such a system *must* be evil, *only evil* ; and cannot fail of being a curse to society in proportion to its prevalence.

That unbelief really is, and must ever be, thus essentially "evil" in its effects, will be evident to all who impartially consider, either, on the one hand, the *doctrines* which it inculcates ; or, on the other, the

practical morality with which it is daily seen to be connected.

With regard to the DOCTRINES which unbelief inculcates, they are, notoriously, as to the great mass of them, radically and essentially corrupt. It has, indeed, been often remarked, and with great justice, that INFIDELITY HAS NO PRINCIPLES. That is, not only is there no one system of doctrine in which its votaries are generally agreed; but it is an equally undoubted fact, that almost every religious and moral principle, however fundamental, has been, in turn, doubted, or explicitly rejected, by the most eminent leaders in their ranks. In truth, there was scarcely the smallest exaggeration in the charge of the satirist, when he said, that the sum of their creed is "to believe in all unbelief." Every thing, with them, if not directly, is at least virtually questioned or denied. The existence, the perfections, and the providence of God; a state of rewards and punishments hereafter; the fixed and immutable distinction between right and wrong; the holy Sabbath; the marriage tie; gratitude; forgiveness of injuries; and the tenderest charities of domestic and social life;—have all been stigmatized and renounced, as weak and mischievous prejudices; and the innocence of the worst crimes boldly maintained. There is, in fact, hardly a doctrinal truth, or a practical virtue, which has not been called in question, if not scornfully rejected, by distinguished leaders in unbelief. Nay, infidelity daily sanctions, as innocent, if not com-

mendable, some of the most pestiferous vices which poison and disturb human society:—pride, ambition, avarice, malice, revenge, duelling, suicide, selfishness, and profligate sensuality, have all found zealous advocates among the enemies of the Bible, and may, indeed, all be said to grow out of infidel speculations. The truth is, infidelity sinks the question of right and wrong into a mere calculation of worldly interest, or political enactment. It has no barrier to present against the raging appetites, and worst passions of men, except some philosophical theories, which are destitute alike of fixed character, and of commanding authority. The direct tendency of its doctrines, of course, is, to take away all impression of the evil of sin, and all sense of accountableness for actions; to depreciate and discourage all real virtue; to dissolve every moral restraint; and to bring men back to the unbridled reign of every brutal appetite, and every ferocious passion. Now, is it possible to conceive that such principles, or rather such absence of all principle,—can tend to promote the order, purity and happiness of society? When men renounce all belief in the inspection and authority of any power above them; when no regard for an hereafter inspires either hope or fear; in a word, when they consider themselves as born, like the brutal tribes, merely to eat and drink, and sleep and die;—will they be likely, think you, to live any better than brutes, or really to adorn their rational and moral nature? As well might we dream of darkness begetting light; or

of committing men to the school of Satan and his angels, to be trained up for the heavenly paradise.

And as the *speculative opinions* of the votaries of unbelief are generally and essentially corrupt; so their *practice* has been, in all ages, worthy of their creed. Who, let me ask, ever since the religion of Jesus Christ has existed in the world, have been most conspicuous for the regularity, purity, and benevolence of their lives—infidels or Christians? No one who has eyes to see, and ears to hear, and candour to weigh evidence, can hesitate a moment for the proper answer. That the effect of unbelief in revealed truth, has ever been to generate moral corruption, is attested by all history. Not that all infidels have been immoral men. Individuals of this class, have, no doubt, now and then appeared, who, from physical temperament, from education, or from peculiar circumstances of situation or pursuit, have been decent and regular in private life. How far, indeed, even *these* may have been moulded and constrained by the Christian influence around them, I shall not attempt to estimate. But it is confidently maintained, that a large majority of those who have adopted the principles of unbelief, have been, in all ages, conspicuous for their licentious practice. Is it not unquestionable, that the great body of avowed infidels have been less pure, less rigid in all their moral habits, less confided in, even by one another, for truth, candour, and incorruptible integrity, than a similar mass of those who are known to be Christians? Do we not

see them, in a word, more frequently and unblushingly than believers, neglecting the most sacred duties, and violating the most solemn obligations of life, whenever it serves their worldly interest or pleasure? One thing is certain, that in every instance in which we have known infidelity to pervade a community, and all Christian restraint, both public and private, to be taken off, the moral result has not only been unfavourable, but dreadful, beyond the power of language to describe!

Let it be remembered, too, that this general representation does not apply only to the lowest and most unenlightened class of unbelievers. It applies no less strikingly to the most eminent leaders and writers of the whole band, from *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, down to the latest of the long catalogue. Read the history and the writings of the most noted of the list; and you will find many of them to have been men of the most unbridled and shameful profligacy, and all of them avowing opinions, which they were, no doubt, willing to have considered as the spirit of their own character, and which, if carried into universal practice, would render the society of earth a foretaste of hell. Read, for example, the "Confessions of *Rousseau*," that wonderful monument of perverted genius, who undertook to paint his own likeness; and you will behold the portrait of one of the most polluted and miserable of men. Read what *Voltaire* and his royal patron and companion in unbelief, the Prussian monarch, say of each other; and you will find one of the most revolting

and loathesome pictures of moral baseness, ever presented by men claiming a decent place in society.* Read the private correspondence of *Voltaire*, with *D'Alembert*, *Diderot*, and others, their contemporary brethren in infidelity; and you will see that there was neither truth nor honour in them all; but such a wretched compound of falshood, envy, malignity, hatred, contempt of one another, and contempt of all the rest of the world, as to give a horrible impression of the spirit of unbelief. Read the account which Mr. *Gibbon*, one of the most decent of the whole number, has given of himself; and you will perceive, amidst all the polish and splendour of literary culture,—no single line of moral beauty; no fear of God; no reverence for sacred things; no regard for the welfare of the human race;—but the most heartless and sordid selfishness, vain glory, desire of admiration, adulation of the great and wealthy, contempt of the poor, and supreme devotedness to his own gratification. In short, I have never happened to know, either in the writings or life of any avowed infidel, a single instance of entirely correct and edifying moral example. Never have I been so fortunate as to see or hear of one who seemed to cherish the least reverence even for those principles of natural religion, in which he professed to believe; or to know any thing of that elevated and disinterested

* See *Voltaire's* works, particularly the first three volumes, 12mo. edition;—the *King of Prussia's* Posthumous Works;—and *Condorcet's* Life of *Voltaire* for ample illustration of what is intended, in the above sentence, and in that which immediately succeeds.

moral excellence, which delights in doing good, and is willing to make sacrifices for the promotion of human happiness.

But further ; who, let me ask, have ever been found, throughout Christendom, most zealous and active in forming and executing plans for the benefit of mankind ? What class of persons have ever been most liberal in expending their time, their labour, and their property, for instructing the ignorant, and reclaiming the vicious ; for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and extending knowledge, virtue and happiness in the world ;—what class, I say, have ever been found most ready for every such good work—infidels or Christians ?—My friends, it would be an insult to your understandings to suppose a formal answer necessary. You know that ninety-nine parts out of an hundred of these labours of benevolence, are performed by sober, professing Christians ; that for stimulating themselves and those around them to engage in these labours, their constant appeal is to Christian principles ; and that to see an avowed infidel, or even an habitual neglecter of religion, taking any distinguished part in these hallowed efforts and sacrifices, is one of the rarest occurrences that we can witness. Now when it is considered that the class of sober professing Christians do not now, and, with few exceptions, never did, constitute even a moiety of any people—if the general fact be conceded—and it cannot be denied—the argument is irresistible.

On the other hand, by what class of persons are the great mass of the *crimes* which pollute and disturb society committed? Go to the records of our criminal courts, and to the mournful annals of our State-prisons, and ask whose are the blackest names on their humiliating lists? Are they Christians? Are they devout believers in the Bible? Are they those who venerate and love the holy doctrines and precepts which the Bible contains?—No, by no means. They are infidels, either open or secret. Not that they are all speculative, or, what are commonly called, philosophical unbelievers. Many of them have neither intellect nor knowledge enough for this. But they are all practical unbelievers. They are all neglecters, if not despisers of the Gospel. They are, proverbially, those who make light of the Bible, who hate the Bible, who reject and condemn the authority of Him who came “to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Did you ever know, my friends, a wicked man, who was desirous of corrupting the virtuous, of seducing innocence, or of leading on the young and inexperienced to deeds of profligacy and shame;—did you ever know such an one to aim at the accomplishment of his object, by recommending the study of the Holy Scriptures; or by endeavouring to imbue the minds of those whose ruin he sought, with the principles and spirit of the Gospel? No, I will venture to say, never. The very suggestion of taking such a course, would be

deemed, of all things, one of the most preposterous. No, the only method ever thought of by the teacher of wickedness, is to beget in the mind of his victim AS MUCH UNBELIEF AS POSSIBLE ; to place the character of a holy God, his righteous law, the threatenings of his word, his judgment seat, and all those solemn realities which the Bible unfolds, as far out of sight as possible ; to insinuate that they are all a fable ; and to hold up the doctrines, the duties, and the ministers of religion to hatred and scorn. Can either the fact, or the reason of it be, for a moment, doubted ? And does it not establish, beyond all controversy, a connexion of the closest and most indissoluble kind between unbelief and moral corruption ?

Further ; was it ever known that any son or daughter of Adam was reformed from a wicked life, by embracing infidel opinions ? We have all known many and striking examples of reformation from the most degrading vices effected by the power of Christian principle. We have seen the abandoned drunkard made a sober man ; the fraudulent, honest ; and the profligate voluptuary transformed into a model of self-denial, by the converting grace of the Gospel. But have we ever seen or heard of men thus reformed by the power of unbelief ? Nay, is not such an effect of infidel principles, a thing so perfectly unheard of, in all the mutations of human character, as to render the very thought of it almost ridiculous ? Yet, if infidelity be the rational and benign system which its advocates

allege it to be, why should such facts be unknown? or, rather, why should they not be the occurrences of every day? The answer is unavoidable. I can think of no consideration which it is possible to urge by way of reply, which does not deeply fasten upon unbelief the whole charge which I am endeavouring to establish.

Again; did you ever hear a malefactor, about to die by the hand of public justice, acknowledging as a fault, or lamenting as a misfortune, that he had been more attentive than he ought to have been to the great principles and duties of religion; and ascribing the errors and crimes of his life to his having allowed himself to come too much under the power of the Gospel? There is no risk in saying, that, among all the myriads who have expired on the gallows, such a case was never witnessed. But O how often has the dying culprit been heard to confess with anguish and tears, that infidel sentiments led him astray; that the rejection of the Bible gradually led to profaneness, to intemperance, to lewdness, to fraud, to robbery, perhaps to murder,—and at length to the infamy of a felon's death!

I am aware that it will be said, by those who are determined to resist all evidence on this subject, that many *professing Christians* have been *as immoral as other men*; that persons calling themselves Christians, have, in all ages, in the name of Christ, and under the cloak of religion, committed enormous crimes. This is, no doubt, a fact; and yet it does not, in the least degree, weaken our argument, or militate against

the doctrine of our text. On the contrary, it rather confirms every word which has been uttered. Were these persons *real*, or only *nominal* Christians? Nay, infidels themselves are witnesses that they were NOMINAL CHRISTIANS ONLY. Why else have they, with few dissenting voices, acknowledged that the morality of the Bible is the best in the world? Why have even those who declined making this concession, ever been fond of stigmatizing such immoral professors of religion, as hypocrites; as acting a part grossly inconsistent with their profession? For if the genuine spirit and tendency of the religion they professed, had been to produce such fruits as these,—then they were not hypocrites, but sincere and consistent. But the fact is, it was because they were *not* real Christians;—it was because they were *not* real believers, as they said;—in other words, were INFIDELS IN DISGUISE, that they acted so unworthy a part. Were all men sincere, practical believers in the Gospel of Christ, wars would cease; persecution, fraud, oppression, slander, revenge, intemperance, and every species of licentiousness, would be banished from the earth:—and the universal prevalence of the humility, the meekness, the self-denial, the benevolence, the forgiveness, the equity, and the purity which genuine Christianity every where enjoins would render this world a foretaste of heaven. But, on the other hand, were the principles and spirit of infidelity to pervade the world;—were all belief in responsibility to a holy God, in a righteous judgment

to come, and in the great doctrines of the Christian salvation, to be banished from among men ;—the effect would be, as experience has fully demonstrated, to annihilate all order, and all virtue ; and to assimilate the society of earth to that of demons and accursed spirits in their dark abodes.

Such, my friends, is a brief sketch of the evidence that the heart of unbelief is “an evil heart.” It is evil in its NATURE, evil in its CAUSES, and evil in its EFFECTS. It is the vital spirit of all impiety, and of all moral corruption. It is the natural offspring of pride, vanity, levity, sensuality, ambition, and of every evil principle. It was unbelief that deceived, seduced and ruined our first parents ; and which, from the hour of their fall, has been the grand source of blindness, deception, rebellion, profligacy and perdition among their guilty posterity in every age. Unbelief leads away from God, from truth, from order, and from happiness. It perverts the understanding ; it hardens the heart ; it sears the conscience ; it corrupts the whole moral structure of the man. It unfits men for the noblest enjoyments and services of the present life, and prepares them for that abyss of the damned, “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ; where the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever.”

From the representation which has been given of this subject, we may deduce a number of practical in-

ferences ; to some of which your attention is respectfully requested.

1. We may see the reason why Christian faith is so constantly, in Scripture, ENJOINED AS A DUTY, and the absence of it CONDEMNED AND THREATENED AS A SIN. The fact is,—as you have heard,—faith is so essentially connected with the state of the heart, and the current of the affections ;—its very nature so inseparably involves moral feeling, practical choice, and the spirit of obedience ; that where it is present, it is the germ of all that is good in the soul ; and where it is absent, there is the essence of rebellion. When, therefore, every thing in the religion of Christ is made to turn on faith ; when it is said, “ He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned ;”—it is as if the language of Scripture were,—“ He who humbly, candidly, and gratefully *accepts* of offered mercy, shall be savingly benefited by it ; but he who unthankfully and rebelliously *rejects* it, and turns away from God, and all his gracious offers, shall have no share in its blessings.” Now, is this unreasonable ? Is it not, rather, in accordance with every dictate of reason and equity, and with every known feature of the Divine government ? Yes, my friends, in whatever point of light we contemplate unbelief, it must appear morally criminal, and those who indulge in it altogether without excuse.

2. We may learn, from what has been said, how many and great are the evils which must necessarily

flow FROM THE DECLINE AND THE WEAKNESS OF FAITH IN THE REAL CHRISTIAN. The "evil heart of unbelief" is not confined to that infidelity which is speculative and entire. It exists, and exerts a pestiferous influence, in the case of many a sincere believer. Our blessed Redeemer often reproved his disciples for their unbelief, or the weakness of their faith. He more than once said to them—"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"—"Wherefore do ye doubt, O ye of little faith?"—Hence, on a certain occasion, they said to him with earnestness—"Lord, increase our faith;" and being "strong in the faith," is emphatically commended and enjoined, as, at once, well pleasing in the sight of God, and connected with rich blessings to him who possesses it. This may appear strange language to an unbelieving world, and may carry with it little that is either intelligible or interesting to the mere formal professor of religion. But real Christians know something of its meaning and force, and often to their painful cost. For, if the foregoing representation be just, then it is manifest, that when their faith is weak, every spiritual feeling, desire, hope and enjoyment must be proportionally weak. When their faith is weak, their hold of Christ, if I may so speak, though still real, is feeble and nerveless; their hearts are comparatively cold; their consolations few and small; their fears many and distressing; and their conversation, generally, less ornamental to religion, and less edifying to those around them. Yes, my friends, when you see Christians cold,

comfortless, declining in hallowed feeling, and relaxing in spiritual activity ;—in a word, when you see them backsliding from what is good, either in heart or in life, —you may sum up the cause of the whole evil in one word—“It is because of their UNBELIEF.” This is the worm at the root of all spiritual duty, prosperity, and comfort. It is because they have SO LITTLE FAITH that divine and eternal things do not exert a more governing influence on their temper and practice. If they had a sufficiently strong faith, they would never be cast down, and would never be found going astray. In short, faith, among the Christian graces, is like the MAIN SPRING in a well adjusted machine. Its character affects every thing. If this be feeble, every movement must be of like character. If this be wrong, all is wrong. But if faith be in strong and lively exercise, all will be well. The hopes, the self-denial, the daily deportment, and the habitual joys of the believer will be such “as becometh the Gospel.”

3. We may infer, from this subject, that infidelity is, in every respect, HOSTILE TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY. Whatever strikes at the root of moral principle, and moral purity, will ever be found to give a fatal blow to social order, and political happiness. An infidel people, will ever be an immoral, profligate people ; and a people characteristically immoral and profligate, cannot long continue to be a free and happy people. It is, indeed, the fashionable, and ever-repeated watchword of infidelity, that Religion

is about to enslave us. My dear brethren, it would be just as true and rational to say, that the light of the sun is about to spread impenetrable darkness over the earth. Nothing can so certainly lead to the most enormous national corruption, and eventual slavery, as the prevalence of infidelity. Unbelief, as you have seen, is the teeming parent of all those doctrines and influences which form the elements of political disorder, violence, and oppression. And if ever we are prepared, as a people, to bow the neck to a despot, either civil or military, it will be brought about, not by coming under the power of the genuine Gospel ; but by closing our eyes against its light ; turning away from its blessed influence ; and yielding ourselves to the power of that pestiferous unbelief, which is, of all things, best adapted to banish patriotism ; to bring society under the profligate reign of ambition and voluptuousness ; to undermine every principle of genuine liberty ; and to convert our population into hordes of cut-throats, and brutal sensualists. The recent history of one of the most refined and literary nations of modern times, furnishes an exemplification of these remarks which it would be difficult to exaggerate, and which cannot speedily be forgotten. Let every YOUNG MAN, then, who wishes to serve and adorn his generation, beware of this evil ! Let every PATRIOT, who seeks the true honour and welfare of his country, beware of it ! Let EVERY ONE who does not wish to see our favoured nation sinking into the common grave of all the Republics which have

gone before her, beware of this political, as well as individual destroyer !

4. We are taught, by what has been said, that if we desire to bring our CHILDREN, and others committed to our care, to the knowledge and love of the truth ;— we must not content ourselves with MERE FRIGID INSTRUCTION, with MERE ADDRESSES TO THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS. That the *understanding* of every rational creature is to be primarily addressed on the subject of religion, is certain ; for we desire no one to yield a blind faith to the message which we bring. But if we desire to perform our duty faithfully, and with happy effect, we must address the HEART as well as the HEAD. We must take measures to enlist the WHOLE MAN in the great subject. We must endeavour to make a lodgment in favour of the Gospel in every power of the mind ;—in the memory, the conscience, the affections, and all the moral habits of the soul ;— and that from the earliest dawn of reason. The moral as well as the intellectual powers are gradually developed, and the former no less than the latter require assiduous culture ; nay, they require much *more* assiduous and laborious culture, because this species of tuition has, of all others, the most potent obstacles to encounter. I am sensible that some infatuated parents object to the course here recommended, and decline taking it, on the delusive plea, that every one ought to be left to his own free choice of religious principles, and that the mind ought not to be early pre-occupied with

what many call "prejudice" on this subject. Just as reasonable would it be to decline informing a child, beforehand, that fire will burn him, if he thrust his body into it; or that theft and lying will render him infamous, if he indulge in them;—lest he should be led to the adoption of *narrow prejudices* on these subjects. Can we too soon fill the minds of our children with abhorrence of every thing that we know will injure them, either in body or soul? Why are parents made the natural guardians of their young and tender offspring, but for this very purpose? Let the votary of "unbelief," or of indifference, with worse than heathen folly, refuse to pre-occupy the minds of his children with religious instruction.—Every Christian, it is hoped, will feel *his* obligation to begin this task, as early as the immortal souls committed to his care are CAPABLE OF RECEIVING IT; to watch, with intense interest, for the means of successful approach to their minds by every avenue; and, after having done all, to "pray without ceasing" for the energy of the Holy Spirit to render the whole effectual.

And, let me observe, that, if this duty be such as I have stated, it opens a wide field for the early, the unceasing, and the prayerful efforts of MOTHERS, to "train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." My respected and beloved sisters in Christ, on you devolves, in the present state of the church and the world, a weight of responsibility which can neither be expressed nor measured. Yours is the

task to impress the young and tender mind ; to direct the early workings of the heart ; to pre-occupy and fill those precious powers, of which evil is so apt to take an early and firm possession ;—in a word, to form the opening character of immortal spirits for God and heaven. More *has* been done, and more *may* be done, by enlightened and pious mothers, to erect barriers in the soul against the ravages of infidelity, than by all other earthly powers and influences together. In fact, if these barriers be *ever* erected, in that manner which is most likely to prove effectual, MOTHERS MUST COMMONLY PERFORM THE WORK. And can there be a more elevated or momentous employment than this assigned to a mortal ? Tell me not of the intellectual force, and literary achievements of a Madame DE STAEL, and others, her compeers, if compeers she had, in her splendid career. The practical wisdom, the elevated piety, and the hallowed usefulness of such an one as ISABELLA GRAHAM, place her as much above the most lauded of those literary females, “as the heavens are higher than the earth.” *They* lived to dazzle, to astonish, or to amuse. *SHE* lived to DO GOOD, in the largest and best sense of the word ;—to dedicate the vigorous powers which her Maker had given her, to the best interests of her family, and her generation ;—to lead her children, and all who came within her reach, to the faith, the obedience, and the blessedness of the Gospel.* While I hold up her sainted image, this

* Few readers need to be informed of, what was perfectly understood by every hearer, when the sermon was delivered,—that the reference here is to the

evening, to all who hear me, I would say to every one of my respected countrywomen—Go, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE. Oh, if we had thousands like her, it would be an incalculable blessing, at this hour, to the American church and nation !

5. We may learn from this subject the reason why the *great*, the *rich*, the *philosophical*, and the *honourable* among men SO SELDOM EMBRACE THE GENUINE GOSPEL ; and also why, when they DO profess to embrace it, they so rarely appear to ENTER HEARTILY AND THOROUGHLY INTO ITS SPIRIT. The reason is—not that there is any deficiency of evidence in the Gospel ; not that there is any lack of those grand and glorious features which are adapted to command the veneration of the most cultivated intellect. But the real and principal reason is, that men “cannot serve God and mammon.” The Gospel is so holy in its character ; so self-denying in its nature ; and so utterly at war with the habits, maxims, and calculations of those who make a god of this world ; that the devotees of fashion, of luxury, and of ambition, must, of course, dislike it ; and either reject it altogether, or, at least, endeavour to hide from themselves its genuine demands. No wonder, then, that in those churches in which the Gospel is faithfully preached ; in which a

late Mrs. *Isabella Graham*, a native of *Scotland*, who, for more than thirty years, resided in the city of *New York*, where her bright and steady Christian example, and her enlightened, active and unwearied benevolence, might really be said to form an era in our annals of female usefulness. The “*Memoirs*” of this excellent woman, published a few years ago, have been so extensively read, as to render any further remark unnecessary.

spiritual religion is constantly insisted on ; and a scriptural discipline maintained ;—separating, as far as the skill of man can go, between the precious and the vile ;—no wonder that, in such churches, the votaries of worldly splendour and voluptuousness are seldom found occupying the place of members ; and that when they *are* so found, they generally appear to feel out of their element, and never really adorn their profession. It is, indeed, no matter of wonder. We ought, perhaps, rather to wonder, that persons of this class, are ever found even stated worshippers in such churches. O my friends, what is commonly termed *fashionable life*, is greatly, nay, irreconcilably opposed to the spirit of the Gospel :—its parade, its toils, its conversation, its vanity, its amusements, (even supposing every form of gross sin to be abhorred and avoided,) are all hostile to evangelical religion. Persons, therefore, who supremely delight in these things, and are resolved not to forsake them ;—will either abandon the worship of God altogether ; or, perhaps, more frequently, resort to those places of worship where a more lax and superficial system is proposed, under the name of Christianity ; some system which frowns very little, if at all, on the licentious indulgences and dissipations of life ; which allows men to “ walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ;” and at the same time to bear the name of Christ’s disciples, and to cherish the confident hope

of reaching that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

6. We may see, in the light of this subject, THE ALARMING SITUATION OF INFIDELS. It is not probable that there are any of this class now within the sound of the preacher's voice. But if there *be* any, I would address them,—not in the language of "railing accusation," but in that of unfeigned good will, and concern for their welfare; and would say—men and brethren, hearken! Your situation is a most serious and awful one! If the real character of unbelief be such as I have stated; if it be evil in its nature, evil in its causes, and no less evil in its effects; if it always arise from an unhallowed source, and always carry with it the essence of rebellion against God; then,—I repeat it—your present course is one of awful guilt and danger; and its end, if persisted in, cannot fail of proving most disastrous. "Who hath hardened himself against Jehovah, and hath prospered?" Unto you is the word of salvation sent. Pardon and peace, and life eternal are freely offered you. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath life; but he that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Why will ye die?"—Say not, that God has given you rational powers; and that, in the exercise of these powers, you have not been able to believe the Christian revelation to be divine. We ask no one to exercise a blind faith. We call upon no one to believe without

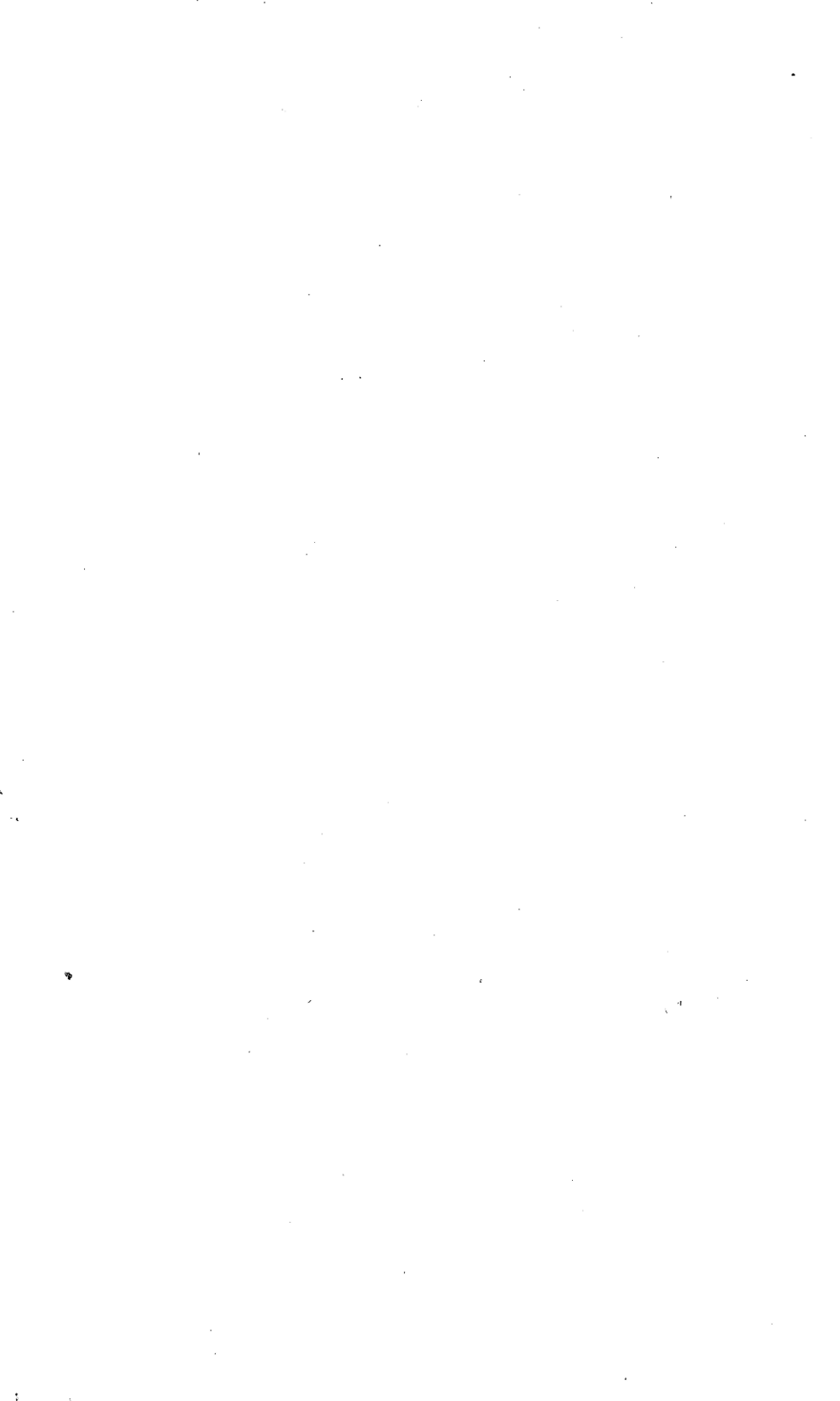
evidence, or against evidence. But, let me seriously and affectionately ask—Have you ever carefully and candidly appealed to the rational powers of which you speak, in examining this great question? Are you certain that pride, prejudice, and corrupt inclination, are not really at the bottom of your unbelief? Have you ever given that precious Bible, which God has sent expressly for a “light to your feet, and a lamp to your path”—one serious, candid reading? Did you ever sit down humbly and impartially to examine the evidences of Christianity? Have you resorted, diligently and patiently, to the best sources of instruction on this subject, within your reach? Are you really *willing* to find the Gospel “a faithful and true saying?” And have you ever laid open your minds, by frequent and importunate prayer, to the God of all grace,—beseeching Him to enlighten and guide you, in your investigation of this most important of all subjects? If you have *not* proceeded in this manner; but have treated the subject with levity and indifference, neglecting serious inquiry, and hardening yourselves against the love and mercy, as well as the terrors, of Him who made you;—then, I can only say, as an inspired apostle said to one in his day—“Repent of this your wickedness, and pray God that the thoughts of your hearts may be forgiven you; for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” What you principally need, then, is not more logical proof; but a

more honest, impartial disposition ;—not new or more potent testimony that Christ was “a Teacher sent from God ;” but “a new heart and a right spirit,” inclining you to receive the truth with grateful affection. May God, of his infinite mercy, break the spell of infatuation which binds you, and make you to “know the things which belong to your peace, before they are forever hidden from your eyes !”

7. Finally ; this subject teaches us the unspeakable importance of CHRISTIANS SHOWING FORTH THEIR FAITH BY THEIR WORKS. It has been often and justly remarked, with regard to ministers of the Gospel, that the best way to defend and propagate Christianity, is, not to stand contending with infidels, parrying their objections, and refuting their cavils ; but to hold forth incessantly, in all their genuine simplicity and power, the peculiar and most precious doctrines of the Gospel. So I believe it may be affirmed, with equal propriety and confidence, that the best way for each individual believer to promote the spread of our holy religion, is to SET AN EMINENT EXAMPLE OF HOLY LIVING. It was once said, by a Female Martyr, of feeble body, but of firm and undaunted spirit,—when standing before her merciless persecutors, who endeavoured to perplex and confound her by their learned subtleties—“I cannot meet you in argument for Christ, BUT I CAN DIE FOR HIM.” My dear fellow-professors, we may not be called to “die for Christ ;” but we can all LIVE

FOR HIM. Alas ! that this is the very last thing that many, who bear the Christian name, are willing to do ! Verily, I FEAR WE OFTEN MAKE INFIDELS BY THE MANNER IN WHICH WE DEFEND AND EXHIBIT OUR RELIGION. Let me call upon you, then, in the close of this discourse, to make it your constant study to “adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things ;”—not by high claims ;—not by angry contention ;—but by holy and exemplary lives. Let it be manifest to all that your belief is sincere and practical, as well as orthodox. O Christians ! if our temper and lives were always entirely in harmony with our profession—we should see much fewer unbelievers around us. A distinguished infidel of the last century, after spending a few days at the house of an eminently pious minister, of high literary as well as religious character, was so deeply impressed with his pure, benevolent and heavenly conversation, that he said to a sceptical friend,—“I must leave this house. If I remain here a day longer, I shall become a Christian in spite of myself.” There is a power in genuine Christian example which cannot be expressed. This is the holiest and happiest of all victories ! Happy would it be for ourselves and for the world, if such victories could be more frequently celebrated. And they *would* be, if we were not all deficient in our duty. Yes, brethren, were we all such as we ought to be, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”—we should

“put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” “They, who are all of contrary part, would be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.” Nay, our light would so “shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, would be constrained to glorify our Father in heaven.” Amen !



DISCOURSE VII.

REVEALED RELIGION, THE ONLY SOURCE OF TRUE
HAPPINESS.

JOHN vi. 68—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of
eternal life."

THERE is something in the gospel that addresses itself with prodigious power to the human conscience. Multitudes, it is true, hear it with profound unconcern; and the reason is, that they hear it without reflection: but let it once come fairly before the mind, and let the mind fasten upon it in intense contemplation as a living reality, and it instantly becomes a subject of the deepest interest. It is like a candle to the inner man of the heart, in the light of which sin, and judgment, and the wrath to come, assume the character of substantial and fearful realities. Hence it were reasonable to suppose that many would attend, for a season, on the preaching of the gospel, from curiosity, or some other

motive, who, whenever its truths should come in contact with their understandings and consciences, would turn from it in anger or disgust. An instance of this is recorded in the chapter which contains my text—an instance too which occurred in our Lord's personal ministry. Having, on a certain occasion, brought plainly to view some of the leading doctrines of the gospel, many who had before professed to be his disciples, charged him with unreasonable severity, and finally renounced their attachment to him and his cause. In reference to this apostacy, Jesus turned to the twelve who constituted his own immediate family, and said, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter answered, both for himself and his fellow disciples, in language of which our text is a part—"Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

By the words of eternal life we are to understand the doctrine of salvation; including the fact that salvation is within our reach, and the means by which it may be obtained. The text therefore obviously suggests this truth—That the gospel, and that alone, secures the great end of religion, viz., a happy existence beyond the present life. As, however, the salvation that is perfected in heaven is begun here; as the same system which professedly discloses the means of happiness beyond the grave, professes also, in this life, to open ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, I shall consider the text as containing the general proposition that RE-

VEALED RELIGION IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

In illustrating this proposition, it will be necessary to keep constantly in view the moral constitution of man. Every one is conscious of possessing certain original desires, which are inherent in his very nature, and which exist independently of all circumstances, and in the gratification of which consists his happiness. The great masters of mental science, much as they have differed in respect to the means of gratifying these desires, have been nearly agreed in respect to their number; and they have generally reduced them to a few. Whatever then is best adapted to meet these original desires, is, of course, best fitted to promote man's true happiness. Taking the gospel just as we find it, I shall endeavor to show that *all these desires are successfully met in it, and in nothing else*: and if I should succeed in this, you will not doubt that my proposition is established. I hardly need say that, so far as there may be occasion, in the progress of the discussion, to compare the gospel with any other system, it will be with natural religion, and not with any thing that professes to come in the form of a revelation; for I suppose it may fairly be taken for granted that, if true happiness is not to be found in the religion of nature, we shall look for it in vain in the doctrines of Mohammed, or of any other teacher than Jesus Christ.

Here then, on the one hand, we have man with his original desires: on the other, the gospel with its various

provisions. Let us see how the one is adapted to the other.

I. The first of man's original desires which I shall notice, and the first in the order of nature, is *the desire of continued existence*.

That this is deeply seated in the soul, is evident from that natural sentiment of horror which is awakened by the thought of annihilation. Try the experiment, and bring home to your own bosom the thought of being doomed to an eternal night of unconsciousness, and tell me whether nature does not stand aghast at the suggestion ! Does any one point to the suicide to disprove my position ? I answer, the suicide is a monster ; and from what he does no conclusions are to be drawn, which do not respect himself. But after all, the most that his conduct necessarily proves, is, that he is willing to risk a change in his existence of which he has no knowledge. Perhaps he is a universalist ; and in that case, instead of proving himself willing to be annihilated, he only shows that he is willing to exchange the troubles of the world for the glories of heaven. Or even if he be an atheist, and thinks to lay himself down in his grave clothes for an eternal sleep, he proves, not that existence in itself considered is not desirable to him, but only that existence may be so burdened with calamity that he would rather sacrifice the one than endure the other. Does any one ask again, how it is, if this desire of immortality be so natural and so strong, that that article in the atheist's creed—

that death is an eternal sleep—has been eagerly embraced, and earnestly defended, by thousands, as if the gulf of annihilation were a fountain of perpetual joy? There is a ready solution of this in the fact that every sinner is compelled to read out of the book of conscience a lesson concerning the wrath to come; and as this involves the idea of a future life, it is not strange that those who are obstinately bent on vice, should regard it a privilege to be annihilated, and should actually strive to hush the clamours of guilt in the dread hope of annihilation. There is then no evidence that the infidel, who scoffs at the doctrine of immortality, is, after all, a stranger to the desire of it: there is evidence only that he had rather give up his immortality than to encounter hell. So then, in neither of the cases which I have supposed, is there the shadow of proof that the desire of continued existence is not inherent in man.

Where then shall we find the evidence, if there be any, that this desire of living is to be gratified? Shall we take the report of the *senses*? Let the senses bring back their testimony from the dying bed of your friend, and see whether it be any thing on which you dare build a single hope. Look; listen; pry as far as you can into the mysteries of the death scene, that if the evidence of a future life be there, you may not overlook it. Is it proclaimed in that convulsion in which the breath stops, and all communion with the visible world is manifestly broken off? Is it written in that

eye whose fire is all fled, and which chills your blood as you come within its frightful glare? Do you find it in that countenance unvisited by a beam of intelligence; in that frame which is moved only as a clod; in any part of that scene, in which all is dumb, and inanimate, and ghastly, and making ready for the cold horrors of corruption? And if you find it not here, transfer yourself to the sepulchre after the door is shut, and the worm has begun its revel; and let your senses brood over the process that is there going forward; and tell me whether the testimony of the sepulchre does not confirm the testimony of the death bed. Now, what you have witnessed in respect to an individual, has happened in respect to the unnumbered millions who have inhabited this earth; by a law of nature it must happen in respect to you. The senses then inform you that you shall die; but they do not, they cannot, inform you that you shall live again: for when have you ever heard a disembodied spirit speaking to you, thus assuring you of its existence? Or when have you ever seen the dust into which a human body had mouldered, rising up into an organized and living form, as if the grave had never held it in its dominion? The senses then report unfavorably to the desire of a future existence.

Let the matter be referred next to *reason*, and see whether she has any thing to say in support of the doctrine of a future life. It cannot be denied that she has: that she bears a testimony on this subject, which,

so far as it goes, is explicit ; and yet, as we shall presently see, it very inadequately meets the desire of existence with which man is constituted. There is a principle in the human breast, call it what you will, that points to a retribution. That this retribution does not take place in the present life, common observation abundantly evinces : hence the necessity of a future life, in which man may be rewarded or punished according to his deserts. This is an argument which is built, not upon the philosophy of the schools, but upon a common principle of human nature ; an argument for the vulgar as well as the learned ; an argument which it requires no ingenuity to comprehend, and no effort to feel. It proves indeed nothing more than that man shall live after he is dead to be the subject of a retribution ; but it proves that conclusively.

To this original sense—this testimony of God in the moral constitution of man, it is no doubt chiefly owing, that we are able to trace some notion of a future life in the records of every age and nation. But lest we should attribute to reason more than she can fairly claim, it is proper that we should see how the question of a future life has actually stood, where she has been left to settle it by her own unassisted powers ; and to give her every advantage, we will refer to the Augustan age ;—a period distinguished by the brightest constellation of genius that ever poured its splendors upon the world. The rude and the learned received alike the notice from within that they were destined to a future

existence. The vulgar, overlooking the difficulty which lay in their way from the dissolution of the body, eagerly embraced the sentiments of nature, and imagined that they should exist in another world precisely such persons as they were in this. The philosophers, on the other hand, pressed with the difficulty which the vulgar had overlooked, from the death of the body, and sensible that identity was included in the idea of future existence, denied that the body was part of the man, and maintained that the whole man survived in a pure intellectual principle. Many, however, especially those who speculated most freely on the physical reason of the soul's immortality, turned skeptics; and even some of the greatest spirits of the age are represented as doubting whether the corporeal and the intellectual would not sink in a common wreck; or rather whether the mind was any thing more than an attribute of the body which they knew perished before their eyes. You perceive then, that, leaving out of view the dreams of the poets in respect to a future life, which had a prodigious influence in forming the opinions of the vulgar, the heathen world were really in an unsettled state on this subject. They indeed abused the light which they enjoyed; but even if they had made the best of that light, it would have been insufficient to conduct them to any satisfactory conclusions in respect to the future. There was a real difficulty thrown in their way by death, of which reason in her loftiest flights could not discover a solution.

Whence then comes it to pass that nature has hopes that she is able so inadequately to maintain? The answer is easy. The religion of nature contemplated man as he originally came from his Creator's hands, without sin; of course not subject to death. But sin was introduced; and death followed in its train. Nature had made no provision for such a calamity: it came in upon her as a surprise; and it is no wonder that she should have halted at such a mighty invasion. Is it not then just what might have been expected, that she should be loth to part with her original hopes on the one hand, and yet unable to explain the difficulties with which she was pressed on the other?

You perceive now wherein the religion of nature was lame on the subject of a future existence. She could not get over the difficulty that came in by death; for this obvious reason, that death belongs to man in his fallen, and not in his original state. The gospel supplies this deficiency of nature, by revealing the doctrine of a resurrection. It contains an assurance that God is not only able but willing, nay that he has actually pledged himself, to bring back the body re-organized from the grave, and to re-unite it to the spirit by which it had been animated. Of this doctrine nature had never dreamed, before she had an intimation of it from Heaven: and yet, when once revealed, she eagerly embraces it, as clearing away her doubts, and confirming her hopes. It is the gospel then, and that only, that establishes the true doctrine of a future life on a

firm basis ; that conveys an assurance to man not only that his spirit shall live after his body is dead, but that his body shall live again, to become the organ of the spirit's operations.

But if natural religion falters on the question of a mere future existence, that is, if she is unable to solve the difficulties which it presents, she has still less to say in proof of man's *immortality*. You perceive, at once, that these are two distinct points ; and that the argument which proves the former does not necessarily prove the latter ; for though there is something within us that proclaims that we must live in a future state to be the subjects of a retribution, yet there is no principle of reason that informs us with certainty that that retribution shall be eternal. I do not say that philosophy, especially when enlightened by Revelation, may not render this exceedingly probable ; but the mass of the world have nothing to do with philosophy ; and are shut up to the plain notions of common sense. What then though we were to admit that a few gifted minds in an age might even arrive at certainty on this subject—yet how comparatively unimportant would this be, while the thousands and the millions were groping in absolute ignorance ! But there is one consideration which proves decisively that all certainty on this subject, independently of revelation, is out of the question : it is that the being who gives life is alone able to continue it : whether it shall be continued or not must depend upon his will : and his will it were impossible to

know, unless he were pleased to reveal it; for "who by searching can find out God?" He *has* revealed it in the gospel, and no where else; so that it is here, and here only, that the question of man's immortality is set entirely at rest.

Say now, has not the gospel and that alone completely met the desire of continued existence? Let the pagan, in whose breast this desire is as active as in your own, sit down and think of the future; and with all the light that he can gather from without him and within him, let him try to solve the problem, whether the desolations of the tomb shall ever be repaired; whether, at some future period, he is to be swept out of being, or else to live forever—and the result will be that he will be bewildered by conjecture, rather than cheered by hope. Let the same questions come up to your own mind, and let the Bible be spread out before you, and how very different the result! Faith looks through the darkness that reason can not penetrate: she kindles up a bright light in the inner apartment of the sepulchre, by which she sees her way into the world beyond it: she beholds "deliverance" written upon its doors, the body given back to the desire of nature, and the whole man bearing the stamp of immortality. Thrice blessed gospel, that has brought life and immortality to light! Sit down by the grave, and hold communion with the future, and say whether this is not a glorious gospel!

2. Another of the original desires of man, which is fully met by the gospel, and nothing else, is *the desire of action*.

Man is possessed of various faculties ; some of a higher, others of a lower order ;—adapted to the sphere which he is destined to occupy. These faculties are designed to be employed ; and there is no lack of objects, either in the material or the intellectual world, fitted to call them into exercise. Now there is in the moral constitution of man a desire exactly corresponding to this arrangement. You see it in the child, anterior to the first dawnings of intellect ; and you see it in increasing strength, as the faculties are gradually developed. Man desires to be active—Where shall he look for the complete gratification of this desire but to the gospel ?

Let it be observed, in the first place, that the gospel, and that only, *gives a right direction to the human faculties*. That these faculties have some how or other acquired a wrong direction—that they have received an impulse which provokes conscience, and offends God, is, with every individual, a matter of personal experience. I stop not here to inquire concerning the origin of this calamity ; but he who would dispute the fact, might as well dispute any fact of which he had the testimony of sense or consciousness. Man is inclined to use his faculties in a way which defeats the design for which they were given him ; which not only brings dishonor upon God, but ruin to himself : else

how will you account for the endless forms of iniquity by which Jehovah has been insulted, and his creation marred, almost from the beginning to the present hour? Nay, how else will you account for the fact that your own faculties are not exerted, or have not always been, in accordance with your conviction of right;—that a review of your life brings up so many things as matter for internal disquietude?

Let us inquire now whether unassisted reason is adequate to devise any means, by which this common calamity of our nature may be removed, and the various faculties which God has given us, be restored to their legitimate direction. And here again, in order that we may ascertain what Reason *can* do, it is fair to inquire what she actually *has* done; especially if the inquiry be instituted in reference to those nations and ages in which her efforts have been made to the greatest advantage. Fix upon the brightest periods of Grecian or Roman history, and what else do you find but a wretched complication of idolatry and crime? Admit, if you will, that there were a few cases which might be regarded as exceptions from this remark;—here and there a philosopher, like a few solitary stars shining in a dark night, who had some good moral precepts for the regulation of the life; yet even their systems of morality were miserably defective, lacking this essential characteristic—that they reached not to the heart, the fountain of all moral action; and this also, that they overlooked, in a great degree, the relation which

man sustains to his Maker and Lawgiver. Nevertheless, the systems of these philosophers were, for the most part, far better than their characters ; and thus, whatever else was true of their systems, they were proved to be destitute of power. Indeed, we may safely challenge the whole heathen world to produce an instance (unless there be some solitary exceptions in which God mysteriously communicates the light of truth to the soul) of an individual rendering a spiritual worship to the true God, or discharging any of the peculiar duties of a rational piety. And if the heathen—even the wisest of them—have utterly failed in their attempts to give a right direction to the human faculties, not more successful have they been who have made the same attempt in Christian countries, professing to exclude all other light than the light of Reason ; for not only have they made war in their speculations on the essential principles of morality, but they have outraged these principles in their practice, and have actually given the worst specimens of the perversion of the human faculties which the world has ever seen. We come then, in the light of facts, fairly to the conclusion that it is not within the province of Reason, to give to the powers with which we are endowed such a direction, as shall accomplish the purpose for which they were designed.

Turn now to the gospel, and see how happily this deficiency is supplied. And here too, I am willing that the matter should be decided by a reference to fact.

Just in proportion as the gospel has prevailed in its purity in any country, you will find the standard of morality has been elevated; and just in proportion as it has exerted its influence on individual character, there has been exhibited whatsoever is pure; and praiseworthy, and of good report. And the Christian can testify, from his own experience, that it is the gospel alone, by means of which his faculties become enlisted in the service of God; and that the degree of conformity which he attains to the divine image, is measured by the degree of influence which the gospel exerts over him. And as the fact is perfectly obvious, so it is easy, by a reference to the constitution of the gospel, to account for it; for while the moral influence of the truths which it reveals tends directly to such a result, there is super-added to this, a special influence of the Holy Spirit, by which this result is finally obtained. So then, the gospel does that which Reason could not do: it finds the soul in bondage to sin, and delivers it; it gives a new and different impulse to the powers of human action, which accords with the dictates of conscience, and draws down the blessing of God.

But the gospel meets the desire of action, not only by directing the faculties aright, but *by opening a noble field for their exercise*. It does this especially by shedding light upon the relations which man sustains to his fellow-man and to his God. To say nothing of the fact that where the gospel is not known, the social duties, so far as relates to the present life, are but little

understood, and still less performed, it is not to be forgotten that the fact that man is a sinner, destined to an immortal existence, invests even the social relations with their deepest interest ; and this fact, in connexion with these relations, is either wretchedly perverted, or entirely overlooked. Nor is the case better in respect to the relations which man sustains to his Maker ;—for if the Pagan world are ignorant, and have always been ignorant, of the true God, it were absurd to suppose that they should have any just idea of the relations they bear, or the duties they owe, to him ; and hence we find that the service they have rendered to their deities has been blind, debasing, cruel, according to the particular character they have attributed to them. But mark the change which the gospel has wrought on this subject. It has faithfully marked out the duties which men owe to each other in their social relations, considered with reference to the life that now is ; and it has gone farther, and contemplated the same relations in respect to the life that is to come ; regarding man as destined to an eternal retribution of happiness or wo. And more than this, it has taught man how he stands related to his Maker ; and what service his Maker requires of him ; and how he may reach the highest dignity of which his nature is susceptible. And in doing this, is it not manifest that the gospel has mightily enlarged the field of human action ? You have to do good to your fellow creatures, not only as beings who are to live here for a little season and then die, but as beings who are to

live forever, and whose eternal condition is to depend on their present character: With your lot cast in a world of such beings as these, how much is there to be done, in the various relations you sustain, for the immortal spirit; how much to deliver it from the woes to which it is exposed, and to elevate its destiny to that of the angels! And then again, in the pure and spiritual service which you owe immediately to God, how much demand is there for action—action of the holiest and noblest kind—action which transforms, while it exalts, the character, and brings the soul into intimate communion with God, and causes it even here well nigh to breathe the atmosphere of the third Heavens! And the grave, which seems to the eye of sense to constitute the farther boundary of the field in which our faculties can be employed, really opens a new field in which they are destined to a boundless and glorious operation. In that world of light which faith discovers beyond the present, I acknowledge that we know but in part in what way the glorified inhabitants shall be employed; but we have the testimony of the Bible that they will find no lack of employment: in celebrating the praises of Heaven, in casting their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, in executing the various commissions with which Jehovah may charge them, they will be completely, delightfully, perpetually, occupied. "Therefore,"—says the apostle John, to whom a revelation of the employments of the redeemed had been made—

“therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”

Moreover, the gospel meets the desire of action in man, *inasmuch as the employments to which it points are fitted, in a high degree, to improve his faculties, and thus render him capable of more vigorous and successful action.* It is a law of our nature that while the employments to which an individual voluntarily gives himself, strongly indicate his character, so his character must receive its complexion in a great degree from the nature of his employments. Now the employments which the gospel marks out, are of the noblest kind: they are fitted not only to exalt and purify the affections, but to quicken and brighten every faculty: and hence, not only the moral but the intellectual character—the whole man will, no doubt, under this influence, be forever advancing from glory to glory. Is it not reasonable to suppose that the period will arrive, when that mind, now just beginning to develop its powers, will, by being trained in the employments to which it is destined, have gathered the might of an angel;—that it will act with an energy which will make its most vigorous efforts in the present life seem like the imbecile operations of the mind of an infant?

If it be so then, that the gospel alone gives a right direction to the human faculties;—if it opens the noblest field for their exercise:—and if the employments

to which it points are fitted to invigorate and improve them forever ; there is surely no room for doubt that the gospel, and that only, successfully meets the desire of action.

3. Let us proceed to another of the original desires of man, viz., *the desire of knowledge*, and see how far the gospel has made provision for this.

That this is an original desire, no one can doubt, who watches the operations of his own mind, or observes those of others. The child discovers it in its earliest exercise of the powers of speech, by its almost numberless inquiries, many of which would baffle the highest human intellect. And this desire grows with the growth, and strengthens with the strength. And as you see its operation in others, so also you feel it in your own bosom ; often exciting to earnest and persevering efforts. By what means can this desire be most successfully gratified ?

I am not disposed to question that man may advance far in many departments of knowledge, with no other light than the light of nature. He may analyze the very elements of the material world, and ascertain the laws to which they are subject ; he may number the flowers of the field, and the beasts of the earth ; he may penetrate the unfathomable ocean, and mount up among the stars, and call them by their names, and even guide the lightning ; he may understand well the organization of his own frame, and may have skill to

dislodge disease in its more inveterate forms ; he may be familiar with the operations of mind, and may be able to arrange its various powers, and show the reciprocal influence of the understanding, the will, and the affections, upon each other. And he may go farther still, and may know something of God ; he may trace the evidences of his power, wisdom, and goodness, in the sun, moon, and stars ; in the world around him, and in the world within him ; and as I have already intimated, he may know something, or I should rather say, conjecture something, concerning immortality and retribution. But in this latter department of knowledge, I mean that which respects the character of God, and man's eternal relations, human Reason is at best but an inadequate instructor. And he who is left solely to her teaching, will, as all experience proves, be left on some of the most important of all subjects, to ignorance, doubt, or error.

But if Reason does not meet, to the full extent, man's desire of knowledge, let us inquire whether *this* deficiency also be not supplied by the gospel.

Of the knowledge to be derived from the Bible, one of the first attributes is, that it is, in the highest degree, *practical*. There are various kinds of knowledge which can be turned to no account beyond the gratification of curiosity : the philosopher may amuse himself, for instance, by ascertaining, with microscopic eye, the organic structure of an insect : but it would be difficult

for him to bring the result of his inquisitive labor to bear upon the more important objects of life. Not so with the knowledge which the gospel furnishes : every truth which it brings to light or confirms, is capable of being reduced to practice ; it is adapted to influence the affections, and through them to reach the life. Moreover, its truths are all interwoven with the best interests of man : they relate to God as his Creator, Redeemer, and Judge ; and to himself in all the relations which he bears to this world and to another. In short, the Bible contains every thing that it is necessary he should know, that he may attain the end of his existence, both as it respects the life that now is, and that which is to come.

Let it be observed, in the next place, that the knowledge which the gospel communicates, is as *sublime* as it is practical. The subjects to which this knowledge relates, beyond any other which the mind ever conceived, bear the stamp of moral grandeur. There is the character of God, who is without beginning of days or end of years ; arrayed in the majesty of infinite perfection ; ruling in all worlds, and controlling all events ; sustaining at once the mote that glitters in the sunbeam, and the orb of glory from which sunbeams emanate. There is the creation of the world ; the formation of the heavens, and the earth, and the ocean ; the rising up out of nothing of the ten thousand forms of beauty and grandeur, which we behold around us. There is the

soul of man, destined to an eternal existence, and an eternal retribution. There is the law of God, a transcript of the moral perfections of the Highest ; reaching all moral beings through every period of their existence. There is the mediatorial dispensation, which originated in the counsels of infinite wisdom ; which is founded in the expiatory death of the Son of God ; whose influence extends probably to every world, and whose results are to be known in the final consummation of all things. These are some of the subjects on which the Bible gives us information ; and the truths which it reveals respecting them, are not less sublime than the subjects themselves ; and the manner in which the revelation is made, partakes of the same unparalleled sublimity. Say then whether the knowledge to be derived from the gospel, does not, in this respect, far outrun every other species of knowledge ? Let Reason do her utmost, and her discoveries, compared with those which the Bible makes, are tame and grovelling.

Let not the infidel here arraign Christianity on the charge of being a religion of mysteries ;—of requiring a blind faith in doctrines which she does not condescend to explain. It is a slander upon the gospel to say that it requires our belief in any thing for which it does not give us the fullest evidence. It does indeed reveal many facts which may suggest inquiries which it meets only in silence ; nevertheless, so far as it goes, it is explicit. For instance, the fact that Jesus Christ died

as a propitiatory sacrifice, is perfectly intelligible ; and it is entitled to full belief, because it comes to us on the testimony of God : but if we undertake to ascertain the entire influence of this measure on the divine government, or how the Son of God assumed human nature that he might become a sufferer, we can gather no light from the gospel to assist in the prosecution of such inquiries. And so it is of many other doctrines :—of the fact we are abundantly certified : of the manner, circumstances, reasons of the fact, we are left in entire ignorance.

But if infidelity will not yield this charge against the gospel, let her pause and inquire whether the ground which she herself occupies is not giving way beneath her ;—whether Christianity may not stand up and confront her with her own accusation. Reason teaches that there is a God, and that he exists everywhere ; but ask Reason how the Infinite Spirit pervades all space, and she is as dumb as the gospel is to the question, how two distinct natures are united in the person of the Son of God. Reason has ascertained the principle of gravitation in the material world ; that is, she has ascertained that such a principle exists ; but advance a step further, and ask for an analysis of this wonderful principle,—a physical cause of this universal attraction,—and she has literally nothing to say. The truth is that, by the light of nature, God has brought certain facts within our reach, which he has not conde-

scended to explain ; and, by the light of Revelation, he has brought certain other facts within our reach, of the reasons of which he has left us in the same absolute ignorance. So that nature has her mysteries as well as Revelation ; and if you reject either, you must reject both, on the same ground. There is reason to believe that the gospel has revealed as much, as man, with his present limited capacities, would be able to understand ; and he who is disposed to complain of the deficiencies of Revelation, had better set himself to answer the question, why he was not created an angel rather than a man.

It is another attribute of the knowledge which the gospel imparts that it is *forever progressive*. Let an individual make the Bible his study through life, and you can scarcely calculate the amount of knowledge which he will gain. The Bible differs from every other book in this—that its treasures are inexhaustible. The more you study it, the richer the reward which crowns your efforts ; every step you advance conducts you into a region of brighter and still brighter glory. Nor is it an objection to this statement, that he who sets himself down to the Bible, with a spirit of skepticism, or a spirit of indolence, does not become a proficient in divine knowledge, or even denies the truths which it reveals, and seals this fountain of heavenly light against himself ; for though the treasures of knowledge are there, such is the ordinance of God that

only the diligent and the docile have access to them. *They* advance—I appeal to the experience of the humble and faithful of every age—they advance in the knowledge of all that is great, and noble, and worthy of their immortality, from glory to glory.

But he who walks in the light of the gospel here, is destined to walk in the brighter light of Heaven hereafter. In that world, for whose communion and joys the gospel will have served to prepare him, his advantages for acquiring knowledge will be greatly increased. The intellect, no longer clogged by a timent of clay, or misled in its investigations by the workings of corruption, will have mounted up towards the dignity and energy of a seraph. What was here attended with doubt, will there be attended by certainty: what were here objects of faith, will there be objects of vision. The great subjects of knowledge will indeed, in a general sense, be the same: the mediation of the Son of God, in its various connexions and influences, will occupy the mind forever; but the knowledge of these subjects will be immensely extended; and will become more and more so through eternal ages. Think of a mind whose powers are forever brightening, destined to pass an eternity in the full blaze of Jehovah's glory, and estimate, if you can, the amount of knowledge, which, with such advantages, it must ultimately acquire!

I ask now, my friends, what more could have been done to gratify the desire of knowledge, than has been done in the gospel? Must not human Reason here own her deficiency; and may not the gospel reasonably claim to have supplied it to the utmost? If the knowledge which it communicates here be the most practical, the most sublime, in every respect the most important, to us; and if it offers itself as a guide to bring us to a world, where there will be no darkness at all, and where the light will shine, not only with eternal, but ever increasing brightness, I ask again, has it not done all in this respect that we could ask, or even desire?

4. Another of the original desires of man for which the gospel, and that alone, effectually provides, is *the desire of the approbation and esteem of other beings*. You see the operation of this desire too in the earliest stages of childhood;—in the unuttered joy of the infant, when its mother smiles upon it; and in its deep susceptibility to every look of displeasure. It is active also in every period of life, and in every individual; or if there be any cases to be excepted, they are those in which vice has turned men into monsters, and invaded even their original constitution.

I assume it here as a truth, that men are constituted with an original sense of right and wrong; the perception of each being accompanied by a corresponding feeling of approbation or disapprobation. Men may

abandon themselves entirely to vicious habits ; but they cannot approve of their own conduct in doing so, or respect themselves, so long as they continue it. And it is equally beyond their power to regard with approbation a similar course in others, or to esteem the characters of those by whom it is exhibited. However depraved the feelings of men may be, their natural convictions are in favor of a virtuous life ; and he who adopts any other course, so long as the moral constitution of man remains as it now is, can never expect to obtain the substantial regards of his fellow men.

Now I do not say that man, by the light of nature, may not ascertain many of the duties that belong to his social relations ; and certainly all that Reason has to say on this subject is in favor of a life of virtue. Nevertheless, I dare appeal to the records of Paganism, from the beginning, for evidence that, if Reason has discovered to man, in some degree, his duties, she has not been able effectually to enforce them. Wherever the gospel has not existed, malice, envy, revenge, every evil passion, has held the soul in dominion, in spite of all that Reason could do to redeem it. But the gospel, just in proportion as it has prevailed, has brought into exercise a spirit of forgiveness towards enemies, and a spirit of benevolence towards all men ; in a word, it has changed man from an enemy into a brother to his fellow man ; and in so doing has given him a character which commends him to universal esteem. Not

those only who live within his sphere of benevolent action—the wretched and the friendless, who are relieved by his bounty, or others who may be immediately blessed by his influence—but all to whom his character is known, will give him the tribute of their favorable regard. Even the wicked, much as they may be reprov'd by the lustre of his virtues, will nevertheless, at least secretly, respect and honor him ; and the good will regard him with complacency and delight. If such a character is formed by the gospel, and that only, is it not manifest that the gospel alone meets the desire of the approbation and esteem of other beings, at least so far as relates to our fellow men ?

I admit that there are qualities belonging to human nature, upon which men may bestow a kind of admiration : there are characters formed by other influences than those of the gospel, which emblazon the page of history, and have the privilege of a sort of earthly immortality. There is, for instance, the man of military renown, whose business is conquest ; who breathes most freely on the field of battle, and values his laurels the more for having been drenched in blood. Take, if you will, the case of the man whose very name was lately a terror among the nations ; who would never have been contented till he had drank the blood of every kindred, and nation, and people, under heaven : the memory of that man will live till the heavens and the earth shall pass away : and some in every age will

dwell with enthusiasm on his fearfully matchless exploits ; and will see, or think they see, a glory hanging around his name. But compare his history with that of another man, and one of his contemporaries ;—a man scarcely less known than himself, but known, not for deeds of cruelty, but deeds of mercy ;—a man whose record is not in the annals of military glory, but in the annals of dungeons and lazarettoes ;—a man, in short, in whose character the benevolence of the gospel was a living, breathing, speaking reality ;—and tell me which of the two you really believe has most effectually gained the favorable regards of mankind. I envy not the man who would dare soberly to say that he would rather leave behind him the character of Buonaparte than of Howard ; that he would rather live in the remembrance of posterity as the conqueror, than the philanthropist.

But this desire in man, of which I am speaking, has respect to the favorable regard, not only of his fellow men, but of other beings, especially of God ; for such are the relations which man sustains to God, that, without *his* favor, that of all other beings would ultimately be of no advantage to him.

Here let me recur to a thought to which I have already had occasion to direct your attention—that there is in every human bosom a sense of guilt : man is conscious of having offended his Maker ; and in proportion as his conscience becomes enlightened, he dreads

the result. The question then in which he is more deeply interested than any other, is, whether it be possible that forgiveness should be extended to him ; and if so, on what conditions ? Admit, if you will, that our natural notions of God's goodness could inspire some faint hope of pardon, yet, certainly it could give us no positive assurance of it ; for man has incurred the penalty of God's law ; and for aught that Reason can prove to the contrary, the penalty must take effect, or the honor of the law, and of course the honor of the lawgiver, must be trampled in the dust. The gospel, and that alone, *proclaims the doctrine of forgiveness* : it reveals a plan by which the exercise of mercy is rendered consistent with the rights of justice ;—a plan by which the sinner is forgiven upon repentance and faith in the Saviour ; and not only forgiven, but made the heir of innumerable positive blessings. For “ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” And again, “ God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The fact then that man can be received into the favor of God, and the conditions on which he may be thus received, are disclosed in the gospel, and no where else.

But the gospel meets this desire of man, considered in reference to God, in another way : *it imparts to him a character which renders him an object of divine*

complacency. God cannot but approve his own moral image wherever it exists : this image, effaced from the character of man by the apostacy, it is the tendency of the gospel to restore ;—an effect which the highest efforts of human Reason have been inadequate to produce. Under the influence of the word and Spirit of God, the heart gradually yields up its rebellion, and the various passions and affections of the soul are restored to their original harmony. And He who is the source of all moral purity, looks down upon this spiritual renovation, the work of his own almighty grace, and pronounces it “very good.” And He communicates tokens of his favor ; in that peace which passeth understanding ; in that hope which is an anchor to the soul ; in that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. The infidel, I know, will call this enthusiasm ; but the Christian (and he alone, having had experience, is competent to judge) will testify that it is a most consoling and precious reality.

Do we not then fairly arrive at the conclusion that the gospel, and that alone, meets man’s inherent desire of the approbation and esteem of other beings ? Whether we would secure the favorable regards of our fellow men or of God, whither shall we go for direction but to the Bible ?

5. I observe, again, that another of the original desires of man, for which the gospel and that only makes adequate provision, is *the desire of society*. You see

the operation of this, as of the desires that have already been noticed, in the very budding of the human faculties. The child, long before it has left the arms of its mother, discovers its aversion to solitude, and its relish for society ; and if the social principle reaches its maturity at an earlier period than some others, it always continues active, thus proving itself to be an original principle of human nature.

There is an impression, I well know, abroad in the world, to a considerable extent, that Christianity is unfriendly to social enjoyment ;—that the life which she recommends and enjoins is a life of seclusion from the world. That individuals professing Christianity have adopted such a course of life it were in vain to deny : that in some ages, a large part of the professed disciples of Christ have shut themselves up in cells and monasteries, is a fact well authenticated in the history of the church : nevertheless, it was not the genuine gospel, but a perversion of it, which, in every instance, led to this result. Christianity, in its very nature, is social : it contemplates man indeed in the closet, but it contemplates him also in the family, in the church, and in the world ; and he who shuts himself out from society under the pretence of escaping the temptations of the world, and of serving God more faithfully in his closet, has wretchedly perverted the gospel, and made shipwreck of his Christian obligations.

Observe then, in the first place, that *a large part of the duties which the gospel enjoins are social duties*; —duties which we owe to those who are united with us in the various relations of life. It is not enough that we enter our closets and pray for our fellow men; but we are required to go out into the world, and do them good; to discharge duties towards them which imply that we are meeting them in our daily walks, and mingling with them in frequent intercourse. Moreover, many of the duties which devolve on Christians, require that they should associate in the performance of them; and in general, they are commanded to be fellow helpers together unto the kingdom of God. So you perceive that the social principle in man is consulted in the general constitution of the gospel.

Nor let it be forgotten that it is the tendency of the gospel *to refine and exalt the social affections*, as well as to delineate and enforce the social duties. What is it that embitters the intercourse of men with each other? Is it not a spirit of pride, ambition, envy, revenge? These and all other unhallowed principles that lodge in the soul, we have already seen, it is the tendency of the gospel to exterminate; and at the same time to bring into exercise the gentler affections, and to cherish a spirit of universal good will. Thus while Christianity enjoins duties which require that man should be social, she also sends a purifying influence to

the very elements of his social nature ; at once marking out a field for him, and fitting him to occupy it.

Moreover, Christianity meets the desire of society in another respect ;—I mean, *in the establishment of the Church*. Here the disciples of Christ are united by a bond of holy brotherhood, for the very purpose of being helpers of each other's faith and joy. What though they may belong to different ranks of society, and may have been born in different countries, and educated, in many respects, to different habits ; what though they may have been brought together, for the first time, from the remotest parts of the earth ; if they speak the same language, they instantly recognise each other as members of the same sanctified community. And they have common hopes, and joys, and sorrows, and wants, and interests, which bring them together in common acts of contrition, and supplication, and thanksgiving, at the throne of grace. But the sweetest of all their acts of communion is that in which they commemorate the foundation of all their hopes—the death of Jesus Christ their Saviour. Oh when they meet around the sacramental table, and together lift up their hearts in devout thanksgiving, and renew the pledges of their christian affection, and pour their hearts into a common offering of gratitude and love to the Saviour, methinks this is the purest, noblest, sweetest, exercise of which the social affections are here susceptible. It is a communion which no doubt resembles more nearly than any thing

else on earth the communion of the redeemed in glory.

Hitherto, under this article, I have considered the gospel as meeting the social desire of man in the present life: but it does more than this—it meets the same desire *through every period of his existence*. For aught that appears to the eye of sense, when the intercourse of friends ceases in this world, it ceases forever; and Reason, in her most improved state, can do nothing better than dream on this subject. A notion that has prevailed to a considerable extent, in the pagan world, is that, if the spirit survives the body, it passes into some other body, and becomes the animating principle, perhaps of a beast or a reptile: how unfriendly this doctrine is to any thing like social enjoyment in a future world, I need not stop to show. And even the philosophers who believed in the immortality of the soul as a pure intellectual principle, having had no other idea of social intercourse than through the medium of the senses, must have been, as we know they were, exceedingly perplexed on the question, whether the intercourse of friends could ever be renewed in a future life. Now the gospel has set this question fully at rest. It has revealed the delightful truth, that every christian friendship is formed for eternity;—that the Christian, to whose languid faith the dark valley sometimes seems doubly dark, because he leaves on the hither side of it, his beloved friends in Jesus, may console himself with the reflection that he has friends in

Heaven too waiting his arrival ; and that even those whom he leaves behind, are destined soon to follow in his upward track. To say nothing of the intercourse which redeemed spirits may enjoy with each other in their disembodied state, of which it must be confessed that we know comparatively little, what advantages for social enjoyment must be furnished by that state on which the Christian will enter at the final consummation ! Yes, the gospel bids the believer in Jesus anticipate a meeting hereafter, not with his beloved friends only, with whom he had here endured the conflicts and trials of the christian life, who had been the helpers of his faith and the sharers of his joy ; but with the innumerable multitude who constitute the general assembly and church of the first born ; with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs ; all of every name and from every clime, who have been ransomed by the blood, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. Oh, what a community must that be in which the Christian is destined to mingle ! And then again, his own character, and the character of each one of that glorified assembly, will have been so purified and exalted, that there will be a susceptibility of enjoyment from this blessed communion, surpassing all our present conceptions. And this susceptibility will be constantly increasing, as they unitedly cast their crowns before the throne, and walk over the plains of immortality, shouting the praises of redemption.

The angels—they are of a higher nature than man—nevertheless the gospel bids the Christian anticipate a communion with them also. We are assured that they are not indifferent to his interests in the present life; that they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation. We know, moreover, that they regard with deep interest the scheme of man's redemption, and are represented as eagerly prying into its mysteries. How natural that when the Christian is admitted to that world of which they are native inhabitants—they should desire to associate with him, not only from the general benevolence of their nature, but to learn more of that wonderful plan by which he has been redeemed. The gospel assures us that they *will be* his associates; and in the Revelation of St. John they are represented as even joining in the new song :—"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

I may say also reverently that the gospel opens up to the believer the prospect of a holy intimacy with JEHOVAH himself, especially in the character of a Redeemer. Such an intimacy indeed, in one sense, it

secures to him here: all this sacred intercourse, however, is carried on through the medium of faith; but hereafter faith will give way to vision, and the glorified saint will be permitted to contemplate his unveiled majesty; and to commune with him, I had almost said, as a man communes with his friend. Between the Christian and his Redeemer there will indeed always be the whole distance that there is between finite and infinite; nevertheless there will be a delightful and eternal communion between them;—a communion which is all condescension on the one hand, and all reverence, gratitude, and love, on the other.

I inquire now, is not the social desire in man completely gratified by the gospel? And in this view of the gospel, what light and consolation does it shed over the valley of death! Mark that Christian whose eyes are glistening in death, and whose lips are open, for the last time on earth, to bid farewell to his beloved friends, his companions in the christian life—Do you wonder that it is a cheerful farewell? Ah, the secret of it is, that he realizes that the separation is to be only temporary; and faith anticipates a meeting with other christian friends who have gone before him, and who stand waiting at the threshold of heaven to greet his arrival. And you too, brothers, sisters, friends in Christ, who stand weeping around that death bed, break not your hearts at the departure of that friend, as though you were never to see him again, but rather be com-

forted by the reflection that the interruption of your intercourse will be but short, and that you will soon go to mingle with him in the joys of a purer and more elevated friendship; and not with him only, but with all the happy inhabitants of Heaven. What thanks do we not owe for these blessed hopes which the gospel inspires?

To the several original desires to which your attention has been called, might be added the desire of happiness; but I shall omit a distinct consideration of this, as I choose, in the present discussion, to regard happiness as the end to be attained, and the gratification of the other desires as the means of its attainment. If I have succeeded in showing that the gospel meets the desire of continued existence, the desire of action, the desire of knowledge, the desire of the approbation and esteem of other beings, and the desire of society, nothing more surely need be said to show that it meets the desire of happiness: and here I may safely rest the argument of the discourse. Man is constituted with various original desires, on the gratification of which his happiness depends. These desires the gospel, and that only, exactly meets. Therefore REVEALED RELIGION IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

On a brief review of this subject, let me ask, in the first place, whether it does not furnish *a conclusive argument for the divinity of the gospel?* We have seen that the gospel makes provision for all the original

desires of man ; and that it removes all the difficulties which lie in the way of the gratification of these desires, in consequence of man's having become a sinner. For instance, man desires an immortal existence ; but as a sinner he has become liable to death : the gospel has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. Again, man desires the gracious approbation of God ; but as a sinner he has become obnoxious to the divine displeasure : the gospel reveals a way by which he can be forgiven and accepted. Is it so then, that the gospel not only contemplates man with the inherent desires which belong to his nature, but that it contemplates these desires in connexion with the fact of his being a fallen creature ? In short, does it regard him just as he is, and make provision for him just as he is ? Who then will dare say that this could have been the product of any human intellect ; or that any other being than He who formed man with his original desires could have framed a system by which those desires should be completely gratified ? And then again, are not the attributes of Jehovah imprinted on the very constitution of the gospel ? Where will you look for the evidence of infinite knowledge, if it be not in that perfect acquaintance with the human heart that is displayed by the author of the Bible ? Where for the evidence of infinite wisdom, if not in the exact accommodation of means to ends which the gospel discloses ; especially where the case to be consulted was

so complicated, so difficult, and had defied the powers of the most exalted intellects on earth? Where for the evidence of infinite benevolence, if not in the provision which the gospel offers for all the moral wants of man; provision to relieve him from miseries of which he has himself been the voluntary cause? He who can contemplate facts like these, and yet withhold his assent to the divinity of the gospel, must be sadly deficient either in reason or conscience: he must either belie his own convictions, or else he must be incapable of estimating evidence which is brighter than the sun at noon-day.

It is a consideration which gives much additional importance to this argument for the divinity of the gospel, that it is one which is within the reach of every mind, and is capable of being readily brought home to every bosom. It requires no deep research, no patient investigation, to feel its full force; for the original desires of the human breast are continually active; and we have only to open the Bible to see that it reveals a system which effectually provides for them. Hence one reason why the obscure and the unlearned may and do attain to just as deep a conviction of the truth of the gospel, as those who are given to profound research. They may know little or nothing of the philosophical evidence of Christianity, and perhaps may never have had their thoughts turned to many of the most common arguments in its favor; but they know that it is precisely what they need; that it calms their

fears, and assuages their sorrows, and pours light upon their darkness, and lifts up their souls to an unearthly joy ; and you might as well attempt to convince them that noonday was midnight, as that this system had not God for its author. Blessed be God that he has thus written the evidence of Christianity in our very nature ; and that he who pronounces it a fable is obliged to shut his eyes upon the light within him, as well as the light around him !

Again : *How malignant is the spirit of infidelity !* Suppose Christianity were really a fable—it would discover malignity in the unbeliever to oppose it even then ; for upon no principle can it be charged with any injurious tendency, and there are millions to testify that it is a source of rich enjoyment. It exerts a general influence on society altogether favorable to happiness ; and those by whom it is practically embraced, find, or if you please, think they find, in it a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. It is a malignant thing for the atheist to oppose it upon his principles ; for if death really blots man out of being, why not suffer him to take comfort in his delusions as long as he can ? What harm will result to him, after he has ceased to exist, from the fact that his mind was revelling to the last on the bright visions of immortality ? Nor is it a less malignant work in the deist to oppose the gospel ; for the gospel leaves him at liberty to make as much of the religion of nature as he can ; she closes

not against him a single source of consolation which human Reason has opened; and if others find Reason an insufficient guide, and choose to avail themselves of the aid which they suppose the gospel proffers, and in doing so find a rich addition to their happiness, wherefore should he desire to lay an icy hand upon their joys? If he is safe with the religion of nature, they surely cannot be brought into jeopardy by believing the gospel, even though the gospel be a fable; and so long as their believing it does him no harm, and does the world no harm, why not leave them to all the enjoyment they can obtain?

But admitting the gospel to be *true*, who can measure the malignity which they discover who oppose it? for they are not only chargeable with opposing with all their might the best interests of man in the present life, but of doing their utmost to blast all the hopes of the life to come. Behold infidelity abroad in the earth, and see how the wrecks of human happiness thicken around her! Into that cabin in which the widow is feeding upon her last crust, and holding communion with tears, but nevertheless sustained by the consolations of a good hope through grace, infidelity goes to wrest from her those living consolations, and thrust into her hands the cup of despair. At that dying bed where the Christian is just going off to heaven in a chariot of glory, and is already becoming entranced with the vision of angels, infidelity would fain plant

herself down to prove that all that triumph is delusion, and that instead of rising to the glories of an immortal existence, he is sinking into the hideous abyss of annihilation. Into that circle of mourners bending over the grave of departed friendship, whose hearts, saddened by bereavement, are yet cheered by the prospects which the gospel opens, infidelity rushes, tiger-like, to say that there will be no meeting with that friend beyond the grave, or that every thing in relation to the future is matter of wild conjecture. And universally, she lays the axe at the root of human happiness ; and finds her triumphs not in closing, but opening sources of human wo. Once she was let loose upon the world ; and blessed be God the report of her exploits is known among the nations. The wild tempest that she produced in the moral world, has even now scarcely died away upon the ear ; and the two millions of graves that she peopled, yet bear witness that blood is her appropriate nourishment. The sceptre has indeed fallen from her hands : nevertheless she is on the earth, breathing out the blasphemy, and moving about in the livery, of the pit. She is heard now speaking forth from the dark haunts of pollution, and is seen belching out her poison through tracts and newspapers ; and if she had courage and strength enough, you would see her levelling with the dust all our noble institutions, breaking down all the altars of God, burning every christian church, lifting her standard on every hill and

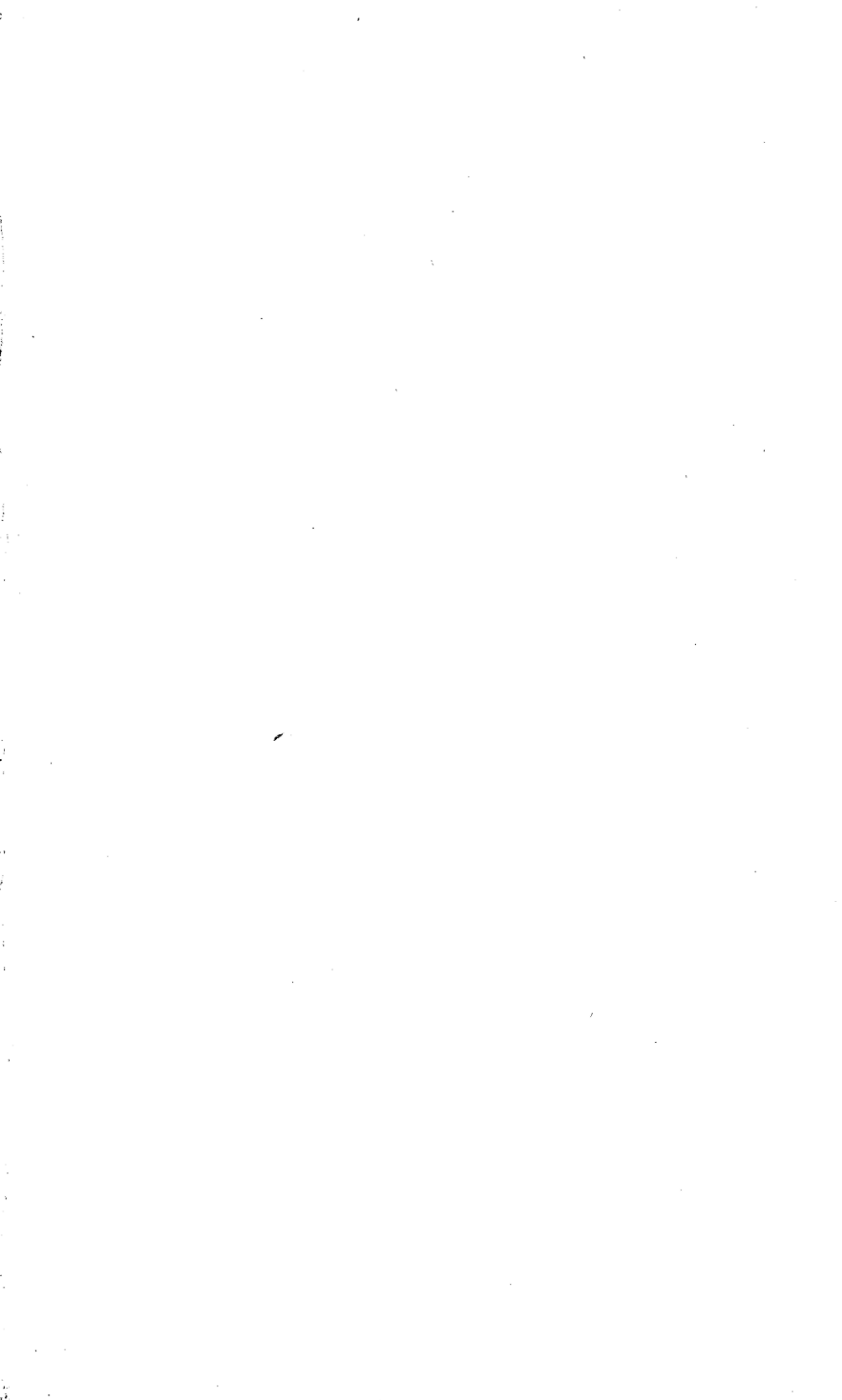
in every valley, and planting a guillotine by the side of it. Let every one then, especially let every youth, beware how he looks upon infidelity even with indifference. Become an infidel, and you are lost ;—lost to honor—lost to happiness—lost to heaven !

Finally : *How blessed the employment of extending the gospel !* It were a noble employment if it were only for the benign influence which the gospel exerts upon man in the present life ; for the consolation which it yields him in trial, and for its general tendency to improve and elevate human society. But when regarded in its connexion with the interests of eternity, as meeting all the desires of an immortal being, what language can adequately describe the importance that belongs to every effort that is made to extend it. Friends of the Saviour, ye are laboring to diffuse happiness throughout the earth ; and not only so, but ye are sowing seed which, though possibly it may not germinate till you are in your graves, will certainly yield a harvest of immortal glory. Go on then and prosper. Let your hands never tire, your hearts never faint, in this godlike enterprise. Fear not the scoffs, nor the menaces, of infidelity. The day is at hand when she will hide her head in confusion ; and another day is hastening on, when she will wail because of her infatuation, and will call upon the rocks and the mountains to fall on her, and cover her from the wrath of the Lamb. In the intensity of her despair, and in

the bitterness of her wailing, she will see the complete triumph of that cause which she opposed, while you will lift up your head in ecstasy that the day of your final reward is come. Bless God that you are permitted to labor for the extension of the gospel, and give him all the glory of your success !

From the height to which this subject elevates us, my brethren, we have a right to cast an eye abroad over the world, and raise the shout of triumph. Hear you that sound that comes from over the mountains, and from the depths of the forest, and from the islands of the sea ? It is the sound of salvation—it is the new song trembling on the lips of the converted pagan—it is a deep current of praise and thanksgiving coming forth from a heart, which has but just learned to thrill at the name of Jesus. Perceive you that stirring in every christian land, such as the world has not seen before ? Believe me, it is the stirring of a spirit which is destined to send the gospel to the ends of the earth. There is no mistake on this subject—there *can* be none ; for already the thrones of Paganism begin to totter ; the cloud that stretches over the nations is fringed with the bright hues of the Sun of Righteousness ; while infidelity alternately shakes with terror, and is convulsed with rage, as she bends over, and looks into her own grave. Yes, Paganism shall die ; Infidelity shall die ; Mahommedism shall die ; but Christianity shall live to sing her song of triumph over the grave of each :

and after this world is burnt up, she shall ascend to the third Heavens, to hold an eternal reign of love and glory. In the prospect of such a triumph, let all on earth, and all in Heaven, shout, 'ALLALUJAH !'



DISCOURSE VIII.

THE DIVINE TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

ACTS v. 32.—“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

THESE words are a part of the defence, which Peter, in behalf of himself and the other Apostles, made before the great Council of the Jewish nation. From the connexion, it is evident, that the things, of which the Apostles were witnesses, and also the Holy Ghost, were the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of these events, two distinct and concurrent testimonies are mentioned in our text—that of the Apostles and that of the Holy Ghost. By the mouth of the Apostles God announced to the world the death, resurrection and ascension of his Son, and by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost he testified that the words of the Apostles were true.

We design to consider these testimonies in reference to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and omitting many collateral proofs of the same important fact, we shall direct your attention to the evidence arising from the two sources pointed out in the Scripture, which we have read.

I.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES.

Besides the Apostles there were many other witnesses of the resurrection of our Lord. During the forty days, which intervened between his resurrection and ascension, he appeared to many of his friends ; and as the Apostle Paul informs us, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at one time. But independently of these, the Lord Jesus, just before his ascension, particularly designated the Apostles to be witnesses of what he had said and done and suffered ; and, especially, of his resurrection and ascension. In order to supply the place of Judas, who had apostatized, the Eleven chose by lot another disciple who had been an eye and ear witness of what Jesus had said and done during his public ministry. On every suitable occasion, afterwards, we find the Apostles publicly testifying that Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended to Heaven—that they had seen him and conversed with him,—that, having had the best possible opportunity of ascertaining the fact, they knew it was the same person, whom the Jews had crucified during the passover at Jerusalem. And where could witnesses more competent and suitable be found ? They had

been the daily and intimate associates of Jesus, more than three years—had attended him whithersoever he went, and had had every possible opportunity of knowing his form, his complexion, his voice, his manners, his person. And, in their frequent interviews with him after his crucifixion, they had abundant opportunities to recognize every characteristic, by which he was distinguished. These witnesses were not called on to identify a person, whom they had seen once or twice or even twenty times, in a transient manner; under peculiar circumstances; but one with whom they had lived and journeyed for years—one whom they had heard, times without number, speak in private and public—one whose voice and manner and style of address were as familiar to them as it is possible to conceive. There was therefore profound wisdom in selecting those, who had been eye and ear witnesses of all that Jesus had said and done, to be witnesses of his resurrection; because they were better qualified than any others, to perform that office.

After his resurrection, they had every possible opportunity of ascertaining his identity. He was with them repeatedly for forty days. They saw him in different places and in various circumstances. They received his instructions respecting the nature of his kingdom and the service which they were to perform in establishing it. They saw the wounds in his hands and his feet. They handled him and perceived by the evidence of touch that he was no phantom. They saw him eat, and heard him, in his own peculiar and inimi-

table manner, give thanks to his heavenly Father. That some of them did not at first sight recognize him—that others did not believe the evidence of their own senses was natural, and only serves to show that nothing less than irresistible demonstrations of identity brought them to acknowledge their risen Master. So contrary, were the things which had taken place, to all their anticipations and previous hopes, that they could not trust to the first report of their own senses. During the dark period in which he lay in the grave, all their hopes seemed to have vanished; and so incredulous was one of them, that he refused to believe until Jesus commanded him to put his finger into the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into his side. Surely this was requiring evidence as strong as infidelity itself could demand.

It may be thought, that as the resurrection is an important and fundamental fact in the Christian system, Jesus ought to have exhibited himself to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that we might have had their undivided testimony in confirmation of our faith. To my mind, I honestly declare, that the testimony of twelve men or even of half that number in the circumstances, in which the Apostles were, is more satisfactory, than if all the inhabitants of Jerusalem had avowed their belief of the resurrection of Jesus. In the first place, because none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were so well qualified as the Apostles to identify the person of our Lord. Many of them had seen him

only occasionally during the public festivals, when he taught in the temple, or performed miracles. To deceive those, who had seen him only a few times, in peculiar circumstances, before his crucifixion, would have been comparatively easy. But that the Apostles could be deceived, as to the identity of their Master, whom they had attended for years, is utterly impossible. In the next place, if thousands in Jerusalem had avowed their belief of the resurrection, they would have incurred no responsibility. The general agreement in the same sentiment would have put down opposition; so that no danger could have arisen from assenting to the common opinion. Such was not the case with the Apostles. They well knew the risk at which they were to bear testimony to the resurrection of their Master. They well knew that, in testifying that Jesus had risen, they would virtually accuse the Jewish Priests and Rulers of a most atrocious crime. Indeed when they affirmed the resurrection they could not avoid charging those concerned in the crucifixion with shedding innocent blood. So deep and full was their persuasion of the reality of the fact announced, that the Apostles knowingly and deliberately assumed the responsibility connected with their testimony. If Jesus had appeared to all or to a great part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the same proof of the veracity of the witnesses could not have been given. The responsibility would have been shared by so many, that no one would have been exposed to danger in affirming that

Jesus had risen. But as the Apostles stood almost alone, and unprotected by public sentiment from the rage of the Rulers, they gave the highest possible proof of their sincerity, in affirming on all occasions the resurrection of their Master. And if the Apostles were sincere, i. e. believed what they affirmed, their testimony was true; because they could not be deceived. They had the evidence of their sight and hearing and touch that the person with whom they were so well acquainted had been with them after his crucifixion. Here let it be distinctly noticed, that the subject to which the Apostles gave testimony was a *matter of fact*, and not an opinion depending on a process of reasoning, which is often erroneous. It was a fact submitted to their senses and not an abstract speculation, nor a sacred tradition received from their ancestors, the truth of which the Apostles were willing to seal with their blood. Let it be admitted, that the Apostles were sincere in their belief that Jesus had risen, and it follows as an inevitable consequence that their testimony is true: because they could not be deceived.

Their sincerity we conceive is abundantly established by the disgrace and dangers and sufferings to which they submitted in announcing the resurrection of their Master. When the Hindoo voluntarily suffers himself to be crushed beneath the car of Juggernaut—when the Mohammedan sacrifices himself in defence of the doctrines of the Prophet—when the Catholic or the

Protestant submits to death, rather than renounce the faith of his ancestors, it proves beyond all reasonable doubt, that he is sincere in his belief of the opinions for which he is willing to die. But it does not prove the truth of the opinions themselves: because men are often fully persuaded of the truth of opinions which are utterly false. The Apostles did not attest their belief of abstract speculative opinions, respecting which they might easily have been in error. They bore witness to a fact of which they had the strongest possible certainty—the evidence of their senses.

In his wise and holy Providence, God so ordered matters, that the witnesses of the resurrection of our Lord gave the fullest proof of their sincerity. They commenced their testimony at Jerusalem, the place where Jesus died and rose again. Within fifty days after the crucifixion, while all the circumstances of the case were fresh in the memory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they announced the resurrection of their Lord. This was not a subject which excited no interest and called forth no inquiry. The interests of the whole Jewish nation were deeply involved in the issue, and especially were the Priests and Rulers implicated in the guilt of the most atrocious crime. The Saducees, who at that time were probably the most numerous sect in the great Council of Jerusalem, could not, and did not hear with indifference a fact announced, which overturned the favourite doctrine for which they so earnestly contended—that there is no

resurrection or future state. The civil and religious power was in the hands of the enemies of Jesus; and would they or did they make no attempt to arrest the report that he, whom they had crucified, had risen from the dead?

After the crucifixion the body of Jesus was not committed to his friends. Aware that he had predicted his resurrection, his enemies having closed the sepulchre with all care, surrounded it with an armed guard. And to account for the absence of the body, they bribed the soldiers to tell a story which bore on the very face of it the evidence of its own falsehood—that the disciples of Jesus had stolen the body while they were asleep. Why were not the soldiers punished for neglect of military duty? Had this been attempted, they would have published the truth and confirmed the fact which their employers were anxious to conceal. Instead of proving that the testimony of the Apostles was false, the Jewish Rulers scourged and imprisoned them, and threatened severer punishment if they persisted in asserting the resurrection of Jesus. Thus they gave the Apostles an opportunity of evincing to the world their full and perfect conviction, on evidence which they could not resist, that their Master had risen.

Why it may be asked did not Jesus appear to the Rulers and convince them, so that we might have had the testimony of the Senate of Jerusalem, entered on their public records, to a fact which carries with it consequences so momentous? In the first place, we an-

swer, that it is by no means certain or even probable, that the Jewish Rulers would have yielded to the evidence of their own senses, and become sincere believers, even if Jesus had appeared to them after his resurrection. Some of them had probably seen Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. All of them had had an opportunity of ascertaining the fact, as Bethany, the residence of Lazarus was not two miles distant from Jerusalem. They had seen and examined the man born blind, whom Jesus had restored to his sight. They had heard the testimony of Judas—that he had betrayed innocent blood. They had heard the declaration of the soldiers, who watched the sepulchre, respecting the earthquake, and the angel who rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre. Yet after all this evidence, the Priests and Rulers bribed the soldiers to tell a self-contradictory falsehood, in order to keep the people ignorant of what had actually occurred. We have here in the conduct of the Jewish Priests and Rulers an instance of the wonderful infatuation, of which the human mind, when under the influence of worldly interests and malignant passions, is susceptible. Strange and almost incredible as the infatuation of the Jewish Rulers may appear, it is not more unaccountable than what we every day witness. Do we not see men by no means destitute of intelligence persevering in a course of intemperance, when they know that hundreds and thousands are daily falling victims to the destroyer? Does not the desire to

remove a rival often impel men to sever all the bonds of humanity and to execute their purpose at the peril of life and the retributions of eternity?

In the second place, we answer, that the Jewish Rulers and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem had evidence more convincing of the resurrection of Jesus, than if he had appeared to every one of them and showed them his hands and his feet and his side which they had pierced. The event we admit was extraordinary; and the evidence by which it is substantiated is equally extraordinary. We mean—

II.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

The Rulers and inhabitants of Jerusalem had the testimony of God expressed in a manner the most clear and unequivocal. Immediately before his ascension, Jesus had commanded his Apostles not to commence their public testimony until they were endowed with power from on high. About ten days after the ascension, while they were waiting at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of this promise, God interposed in a manner so miraculous as to leave no room to doubt the veracity of the Apostles. In the language of the Sacred Historian—*suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the place where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.* These exhibitions were significant emblems, of the power that would attend the preaching of the Apostles, and of the various

languages in which they would speak to men of different nations. Soon they had an opportunity of giving abundant proof that they were endowed with this power. For among the multitude, which came together on the report of what had taken place, there were men from all parts of the known world, and each heard the wonderful works of God announced to him in his native tongue. To the foreigners at that time residing in Jerusalem, a clearer demonstration could not have been given, that those who addressed them were inspired by God, and that the message delivered was from Heaven.

In a transaction of this nature, there could be no deception. To Parthians and Medes and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and Lybia and strangers from Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, illiterate men of Galilee spoke in a manner perfectly intelligible. The report of this event, carried as would naturally be the case to various parts of the world, no doubt greatly facilitated the entrance and progress of the gospel in the places whence these men came.

To the natives of Jerusalem unacquainted with the foreign languages spoken by the Apostles, the uncommon exhibition seemed a confused and unintelligible jargon. And the Jewish Rulers or those under their influence artfully represented, this wonderful display of divine power, as the ravings of intoxicated madmen. Peter addressing the multitude in the common lan-

guage of Judea repelled the suggestion, and showed that this event was in fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, and that it demonstrated in the clearest manner, that Jesus, who had suffered on Calvary, had risen from the dead.

If the facts alleged were so, what proof of the resurrection of our Lord, could be more irresistible? Here were men using eight or nine different languages, who could all attest that they heard the wonderful works of God, each in his own native tongue. The effect corresponded with the means employed. On that memorable day, three thousand men believed and enrolled themselves as the disciples of Jesus.

Again not many days afterwards Peter and John healed a lame man, who sat begging at the gate of the temple, and declared to the astonished multitude, that it was not by any virtue or power of their own, but in the name of their risen Master that this man, known as a cripple from his infancy, stood before them in the perfect use of his limbs. When called before the Priests and Rulers to answer for drawing away the people from the religion of their ancestors, the Apostles made the same declaration, affirming they were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, and appealing to the miracles wrought in his name as proofs that their testimony was true. After they had been imprisoned and scourged and forbidden to preach to the people the resurrection of their Master, they continued to attest the same fact. And when called the second time before

the grand Council of Jerusalem, they again affirmed that Jesus of Nazareth, whom these men had crucified, had risen from the dead, declaring, that they were witnesses of these things, and so also was the Holy Ghost, whom God had given to them that obey him. Now if God thus gave his testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, it was evidence to the Rulers and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem much stronger than if our Lord had appeared to them ever so often in person.

It has been asked in substance—if a majority of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and especially, if the Priests and Rulers having heard the testimony of the Apostles and seen the miracles wrought in confirmation of this testimony still persisted in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah promised to their Fathers, why should we at this distant day, believe him to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world? We answer, we have nothing to do with the conclusions, which the Jews drew, from the facts presented to their observation. The only question to be determined is—did the facts recorded in the evangelical history take place?—Did the Apostles testify, that Jesus rose from the dead, and persist in their testimony, when they had no conceivable motive to tell a falsehood—when on the contrary they put in jeopardy their reputation and liberty and lives?—Did illiterate Galileans speak foreign languages which they had no opportunity of acquiring in the ordinary way?—Did a man more than forty years of age, lame from his birth, rise and walk, when com-

manded, in the name of Jesus, to do so ?—And did the Apostles allege these and other miracles in confirmation of the resurrection which they preached ? If we can satisfy ourselves on these points, we are as competent as the Jewish Rulers or any of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to deduce such consequences as the premises will fairly authorize. We can decide, whether it is more rational to attribute, as did the Jews, the miracles wrought by the Lord Jesus and by the Apostles in his name to Beelzebub and the influence of Demons, or to the mighty power of God attesting the mission of his Son and the veracity of his servants. And here let it be distinctly noticed, that the Sacred Historians, who appear to record, with singular candour and impartiality, every objection made to the conduct of Jesus and his Apostles, do not give the least intimation, that any of the Jews denied the miracles recorded in the New Testament. Nor is there any suggestion of the kind to be found in the writings of either Jews or Gentiles for many centuries after the Christian era. The existence of miracles at the origin of Christianity stands uncontroverted in the records and traditions of that period. Indeed so prevalent was the belief, that the wonderful works ascribed to our Lord and his Apostles were facts, that the early enemies of the Christian faith, admitting the reality of the miracles, attempted to assign other causes than the interposition of Almighty God. This was the ground assumed by Celsus and Porphyry and other writers both Jews and Gentiles.

Neither the Jewish Rulers, nor the people ever denied the facts which we allege as proofs of the divine mission and resurrection of Jesus Christ; They indeed denied the consequences which we deduce from these facts. But so far is the denial of the Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, from diminishing the evidence, that miracles were wrought, that this single circumstance removes all ground of suspecting deception or fiction. Such was the hatred of a majority of the Jewish nation, to the name of Jesus, that they hesitated to use no means likely to crush the rising cause. Now if there were deception it was an easier as well as a more effectual method to check the delusion, by detecting and exposing the fallacy than by assigning causes manifestly inadequate. The power was in the hands of the Rulers; and a majority of the people were on their side; so that nothing could be easier than to detect and expose the imposture, if indeed imposture existed. The plain inference to be deduced from the fact that the enemies of Jesus did not make the attempt, is, that the miracles performed were so obvious, so generally known and believed, that an effort to prove them fallacious would have been utterly useless.

If the books of the New Testament were fictitious, and stated, as facts, things which had no existence, why did not cotemporary writers contradict their statements?—Why did not tradition at least hand down a denial of the miracles to the age of Celsus the Epicurean, and Trypho the Jew, both of whom wrote

against the Christian faith not more than eighty years after the books of the New Testament were published? Neither of these authors pretend to deny the miracles of our Lord and his Apostles. Now let it be recollected, that the testimony which we allege God gave to the resurrection of Christ, in enabling the Apostles to perform miracles in his name, was given under the eye of watchful, jealous and powerful enemies, of men whose reputation, worldly interests and religious prejudices were assailed by every fact favourable to the Christian cause; and it will be seen that we have all the vigilance of jealousy and self-interest and religious zeal to guard us against imposition. In this case the Jewish Rulers without intending it performed essential service to the Christian cause. Their unrelenting persecution gave the witnesses of the resurrection an opportunity of proving, in the most unequivocal manner, their honest belief of the fact, which they so constantly affirmed. They gave to distant ages a guarantee, that, if practicable, they would have denied the miracles performed in the name of Jesus.

Let us reverse the case, and suppose, what some allege would be a confirmation of the Christian faith, that the Jewish Rulers convinced by the testimony of the Apostles and the events of the day of Pentecost had acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah promised to their Fathers—that Annas and Caiaphas had laid aside their pontifical robes and had gone forth as heralds of the cross—that the members of the Sanhedrim

had confessed their guilt, and sought pardon through the blood shed on Calvary—that the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judea generally had become converts to the Christian faith—in such a state of things, would the resurrection of Jesus have been more credible than it now is?—Would the sagacious Greeks and haughty Romans have been more likely to submit to the Christian faith than when it was preached by fishermen of Galilee?—Would there not, to say the least, have been a plausible pretext for alleging, that the whole affair was a political finesse?—that the Jews unable to bring other nations to believe the divine legation of Moses had hatched a new scheme; and connecting the death and resurrection of Jesus with their ancient prophecies were attempting to throw off the Roman yoke and to become masters of the world by a religious stratagem?—Suppose the Jews had generally acknowledged the Messiah in the person of Jesus, what security could we have had that there was no concert and contrivance? Who would have put the honesty and sincerity of the witnesses of the resurrection to the test?—Who would have examined, with eager and jealous eyes, the miracles said to have been wrought?—Who, in authority, would have said, *that indeed a notable miracle has been done by these men, is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it; but that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name?*

If the Jewish Rulers did not deny that miracles were wrought in the name of Jesus, it is all we have any reason to expect from avowed enemies. We do not want their acknowledgment that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. A Court of Justice wants a witness to state facts—to tell what he has seen and heard—and not to give the inferences which he may draw from the facts, presented to his observation. If the Jewish Rulers, by scourging and imprisonment and threats, could not deter the Apostles from publishing the resurrection of their Master,—if they could not deny that a notable miracle had been done in the case of the lame man, we have virtually the testimony of interested and inveterate enemies to facts sufficient to substantiate the resurrection of Jesus. That the Jews were not convinced of the divinity of our Lord is nothing to the purpose. Give us the facts and we are competent to deduce our own inference.

Take a case in many respects analogous. The visible creation, we have reason to believe, has always exhibited the same proofs of the existence and perfections of an infinitely wise and almighty Architect. The sun, moon and stars, which we behold, shone with the same splendour on the nations that preceded us. The same order, and harmony, and variety, and beauty, and adaptation of means to ends, were displayed to the view of mankind in every age; and yet comparatively few nations on whom the light of revelation had not shone, believed in the existence of an

eternal, almighty and infinitely wise God. Now if other nations were polytheists—if their fruitful imaginations peopled every part of the universe with a distinct divinity, shall we resist the evidence presented in the visible creation, that there is only one living and true God?—If then God has given testimony to the resurrection of Jesus equally clear and decisive, shall we reject it; because the Jews blinded by prejudice did not perceive, or if they perceived, did not through obstinacy admit the only legitimate consequence that can follow from the premises, viz. that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world?

The testimony of the Apostles is viewed by many with jealousy and suspicion; because they were Christians.—But were not these men originally Jews, and had they not the same prejudices and attachment to the religion of their ancestors, that belonged to their countrymen to be overcome?—To what can we attribute the change which took place in their views and feelings, except to the evidence of truth which shone so brightly that they could not resist?—To what known principle of human nature can we trace their conduct?—It is admitted that men have invented falsehoods and imposed on the credulity of the world; but in such cases it is always with a view to gain some worldly advantage. What earthly prospects could have sustained these men, under the disgrace and sufferings which met them at the commencement, and increased as they advanced to the close of their career?

We are told that the annals of other nations abound with prodigies said to have been performed on various occasions.—Show us that they are as well attested as the miracles recorded in the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles—Show us that they were performed publicly, and in the presence of powerful enemies, whose reputation and interest were deeply concerned in the issue—Show us that the obvious tendency of these prodigies was to overturn the religion of the country—to deprive the Priests of their livings, and the Rulers of their authority—and that these men could not deny their reality, and then we will admit the force of the objection.—But we challenge the learning of the world to produce one such example. The prodigies reported by Livy and Tacitus, it is well known, were intended to confirm the authority of the civil magistrate, to increase the reputation and emoluments of the Priests, and to flatter the prevailing superstitions of the people. No one hazarded his reputation or fortune or life in attesting these miracles. The politician thought them useful to the state, the Priest received veneration and gifts in consequence of the report, and the common people were gratified with the wonders attributed to the objects of their worship. Not so, with the miracles of the New Testament. They were in direct opposition to the prejudices of the people and the interests of the Priests. We maintain then, that the unbelief of a large portion of the Jews is a strong confirmation of the reality of the miracles wrought in attestation of the

resurrection of our Lord. It assures us that there was and could be no contrivance and concert to deceive. Thus in the words of a sacred writer *the fall of the Jews was the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the gentiles*. Their unbelief makes the gospel more credible to us than if they had admitted Jesus to be the Messiah promised to their Fathers.

We are aware, that in order to complete our argument, it would be necessary to prove that the documents containing the account of the miracles confirming the resurrection of Christ are genuine and authentic. But to enter on a discussion so extensive would not comport with the limits assigned to this discourse. And the subject has been so fully examined and the truth so satisfactorily ascertained that no one acquainted with the result of the examination can doubt the fact—that the books of the New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear, and were published to the world in the age of the Apostles, when hundreds interested in contradicting the statements, were still living. And as no denial of the miracles attributed to the Apostles in the sacred records, is to be found in the writings of either Jews or gentiles, we are authorized to say, the reality of these miracles was never called in question in the first ages of the Christian Church.

But independently of the written testimony of the sacred historians we think we are authorized to say from the nature of the case, that the resurrection of

Christ must have been published at the very origin of Christianity. No society civil or ecclesiastic can exist without some principles of union—some facts or doctrines, believed by the society, forming the basis of union. From the very nature of the case, the resurrection of Jesus must have been one of these facts or doctrines. For, what motive could the first preachers of the gospel have presented to unbelievers to attach themselves to a religion whose author had been crucified and whose body was still mouldering in the grave? Omitting the resurrection and ascension, what could have effaced the ignominy of the cross? Who would have built his future hopes on the promise of one over whom death held absolute dominion? What reason could be assigned, why any one should espouse a cause every where spoken against, and attach himself to a society securing no worldly interest, and gratifying no earthly passion? If then from the very nature of the case, as well as from the declarations of the sacred writers, the resurrection of Christ was preached in the very first attempts to propagate the Christian faith; the enemies of Jesus had an opportunity of examining the evidence on which this fundamental fact rested.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul boldly affirms, that Jesus was seen, after his resurrection, by more than five hundred brethren at one time; of whom a great part were living when he wrote. An appeal of this kind, had not the fact been so, must have blasted his reputation, and ruined his cause. The

same Apostle also, in all his epistles, appeals to the miracles, which he and others performed in the name of Jesus. If no such thing had occurred, would not his converts held by no earthly tie, on hearing declarations which they knew to be false, have abandoned the cause and published him to the world as an impostor? No such thing ever occurred. Hundreds and thousands, of all ages and sexes suffered imprisonment and torture and death, and no denial of the miracles said to have been performed in confirmation of the resurrection of Christ ever escaped from their lips.

On what known principle of human nature can we account for this singular unanimity—this general testimony, that miracles were wrought in the name of Jesus?

We are aware that under the influence of enthusiasm men have persuaded themselves that they had mental visions, and communications with heaven, and that they would have suffered death rather than renounce this persuasion. But what enthusiasm ever led men to imagine they could speak foreign languages, and especially, their hearers to suppose they understood perfectly what was said? What enthusiasm ever deprived men of the use of their bodily senses? If such a case were possible, what fact could be substantiated in a court of justice? Or if one man under the influence of religious phrensy might be deceived, how could so many, respecting the same facts at the same

time? And why were the enemies as well as the friends of the cause seized with the same delusion?

Again, the existence of miracles, which we regard as the testimony of God to the resurrection of Christ may be fairly inferred, from the success which attended the preaching of the gospel in the Apostolic age.

On this issue, Gamaliel one of the wisest and most learned members of the Jewish Sanhedrim advised his brethren to rest their cause. If said he, *this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought: but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it.* If this sentiment be correct, God has most clearly and unequivocally expressed his approbation of the Christian cause. It is a fact as well authenticated as any recorded in history that during the age of the Apostles, Christianity was carried to almost every province of the Roman empire. This is the testimony not only of the early Christian Fathers, but also of the most reputable Roman historians.

Tacitus speaking of the unparalleled cruelties, which Nero the Roman Emperor inflicted on Christians at Rome, about thirty years after the crucifixion, asserts that "a vast multitude" perished on that occasion. Now if in the Capital of the Roman empire so remote from Judea, where the religion of Christ originated, there was at this early period "a vast multitude" of Christians, what must have been their number in Judea, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, in Greece, and in other places, where the Apostles chiefly laboured, and

where according to the evangelic history their labours were crowned with the most abundant success?

Again about sixty-seven years after the ascension the younger Pliny informed Trajan the Emperor, that in Bythinia, a Roman province on the borders of the Euxine sea, Christians were so exceedingly numerous, that the heathen temples were almost deserted—the sacred rites neglected—victims could not be sold—that persons of all ages, of every rank, and of both sexes espoused the cause: and “the superstitious contagion,” as he is pleased to call Christianity, had spread not only in the cities but also in the villages and country. (Epis. 97. 10 Book.) We refer to these authors, because being enemies to the cause, they cannot be suspected of exaggerating the number of professed Christians.

The Christian Fathers, whose testimony on this point is worthy of full credit, assure us that in the first century the gospel reached regions far beyond the limits of the Roman empire. The fact that within three hundred years after the death of Christ, the Roman empire under Constantine became at least nominally Christian, is an irresistible proof of the rapid and extensive progress of Christian principles. Emperors and Princes and Statesmen of every name, whatever be their private convictions, seldom enter on the hazardous project of establishing a new religion, unless confident

that the measure will be sustained by a majority of their subjects.

Here we see a grand moral revolution effected. The religion of the civilized world changed. The question before us is by what means was this change effected? If we admit the principles of the New Testament—that Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven—that he sent forth his Apostles armed not with swords and spears, but with the gift of tongues, with the power of giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead—that he inspired them with more than human courage to brave the most appalling dangers—admit these facts and we have a cause adequate to produce the grand result.

But reverse the case—suppose all this to be a fiction—that the whole result was effected without the interposition of the Almighty, and where will you find an adequate cause? Did a few illiterate men incapable of speaking the languages of the nations to whom they preached, persuade them to renounce the religion of their ancestors, and to attach themselves to a cause connected with no earthly advantage, and insuring disgrace and poverty and persecution? What motives could have actuated the projectors of this enterprise? Not ease nor wealth nor fame. Although the names of the Apostles are now held in deserved veneration, in their day, it was impossible by human foresight to anticipate such a result.

Suppose they were actuated by some unknown and unaccountable motive, how did they persuade others to espouse their cause? The opposition of the Jews arising from causes sufficiently obvious, will readily be admitted. The difficulty of converting the Heathen by human means was equally arduous. The religion of the gospel was exclusive. It admitted of no alliance with the idolatries of Greece and Rome. It waged an exterminating war against the religious rites and ceremonies of every nation; so that the primitive Christians were every where persecuted as Atheists. When we consider that philosophers and statesmen regarded every religion, making no exclusive claims, equally useful to the state—that the worldly interests as well as the hereditary prejudices of the common people were interwoven with the prevailing superstition, it is not strange that the doctrines of the gospel met with opposition. How many artists and mechanics and labourers obtained their subsistence in erecting and adorning the magnificent temples dedicated to the numerous Gods of Greece and Rome! The tumult raised at Ephesus by Demetrius and the Craftsmen, who made silver shrines for Diana, is only a specimen of the ease with which men interested in maintaining the prevailing superstition could rouse the populace against the preachers of the gospel. But why mention the causes which created opposition? The fact is notorious. Besides the violence of an infuriated populace, the

infant Church passed through ten general persecutions, authorized by the Roman emperors, in which hundreds and thousands of all ages and ranks and sexes suffered every conceivable torture.

Now we ask, where in the history of the world is a parallel to the success of the gospel in the first ages, to be found? When and where did any cause, supported by human means so feeble, against opposition so powerful, ever succeed? The religion of Mohammed, it is true, has prevailed for a long period in an extensive region. But in what respects does the success of that impostor differ from the conquests of other military chieftains? Neither the work to be accomplished, nor the obstacles to be overcome, nor the means employed have any analogy to the Christian cause. The one employed force, the other persuasion; the one enlisted in its favour, the strongest and most active principles of human nature, the other conquered by patience and meekness and love; the one succeeded by the policy and force of man, the other by the wisdom and power of God.

In order that it may be seen, that the success of the gospel depends on divine power, God has uniformly frowned on all attempts to propagate Christian principles, by human policy and physical force. By such means the name of Christianity may be extended, but the soul of piety departs and leaves an external form, animated by the same spirit which governs political

communities. And here we cannot omit to remark, that the success, which in the present day, attends Christian missions, in our own and in foreign lands, conducted in the manner and spirit of the Apostles, is a proof that God still bears testimony to the resurrection and ascension of our Lord—and encourages us to hope that by a continuance and increase of the same kind of effort, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ.

Finally in the tendency of the gospel to meliorate the condition of man in this life—to elevate his intellectual and moral character—to raise him from the degradation of sensual and malignant passions, we have the testimony of God to the resurrection of our Lord. It is freely admitted that in Christian lands there is much crime and much wretchedness; because the influence of the gospel is only partially felt. But compare the most favoured portions of the globe under any other system, with those nominally Christian; and how obvious and vast is the contrast!—And this superiority of Christian nations is precisely in proportion to the degree in which the belief and practice of Christian principles prevail. Compare the present physical, intellectual, and moral condition of the Islands in the Pacific, with what they were twenty years ago and you see the genuine fruits of Christianity and of Paganism. We have heard much of the mild and tolerant religion of nature and even of Atheism. Look

at France during the reign of infidelity and from the enormities of that terrific period you may learn the value of the gospel.

In the existence of the pure and 'holy principles of Christianity amidst the pollution of a depraved world, and in the conversion of sinners from the error of their ways, we have a moral phenomenon not easily explained, on the supposition that Jesus has not risen. Whence do these effects originate—from heaven or from hell—from a God of truth and benevolence, or from a spirit of fraud and imposture?—Would it not be strange, if an impious imposture, appealing to God as its Author and alleging his testimony as evidence of its divine origin, had done more to mitigate the miseries of human life—to elevate moral character—to create and cherish noble and benevolent feelings, than all the philosophy of sages, and we may add, all the demonstrations of infinite wisdom and almighty power in the visible creation?—What, we ask, gives the gospel this moral efficacy? Not merely the purity and sublimity of its moral precepts—many of them were known to the ancient sages; but in their hands these precepts had no such efficacy; because they were enforced by no adequate sanction, and accompanied by no demonstrations of the Holy Ghost. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a demonstration of the truth of his doctrines—a pledge of the resurrection of the human

body and an assurance to all men of a judgment to come.

If then witnesses as competent as can be selected have attested the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and have given the strongest proof of their sincerity, if God has confirmed the testimony of his servants by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, by the success and moral influence which have attended the preaching of the gospel, why should we not believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world? Of one thing we feel confident, that we have as strong historical and moral evidence of the resurrection of our Lord as of any other fact equally remote—and if any one believe not the testimony of the Apostles sealed with their blood, and confirmed by the demonstrations of the Holy Ghost, neither would he be convinced by any other evidence.

1. In conclusion we remark, that between the numerous proofs which evince that our most holy religion is from heaven, there is a connexion so intimate, that each separate argument receives support and confirmation from every other consideration tending to establish the same general proposition. In a great and magnificent edifice each wall and column and arch may be firm and capable of sustaining itself by its own separate and independent strength; but when all the parts are connected together and united under one common roof the whole becomes much more secure and durable.

Thus the resurrection of our Lord fully sustained, as we believe, by its own independent evidence, is confirmed by numerous collateral circumstances not included in the view which we have taken. And if this all important question could be decided by enlightened and unbiassed reason, we would have no fears respecting the issue. But such a decision in many cases is not to be expected. It is a question in which every individual has an interest of vast and incalculable magnitude. And on no other subject is the moral state of the heart so likely to exert a controlling influence. If Jesus has risen, then he shall judge the world and render to every man according to his works. And in assenting to the reality of the resurrection, those who disobey the gospel, virtually recognize the certainty of their own condemnation. To be advancing to the judgment seat under an anticipation of approaching wrath is of all states of mind the most wretched and intolerable. A continual warfare between reason and passion, between criminal indulgence and an apprehension of future woe is a condition not easily endured. And if any one be so enslaved by his passions, so opposed in his feelings to the law of God, that he has no intention or wish to change his course of life, he is under a necessity in self defence to close his ears against every consideration calculated to alarm his fears. Motives precisely similar to those which operated on the Jewish Rulers, may induce him to resist

the clearest and most refulgent evidence, that Jesus is the Son of God and the Judge of the world. And it is surely honourable to Christianity, that a bad life is the greatest obstacle to the belief of its doctrines, and a good life the best preparation for the reception of the testimony which God has given respecting his Son—*If any man*, said our Lord, *will do the will of him that sent me, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*. If the evidence of the resurrection of our Lord be sufficient to satisfy a mind desirous to know and willing to believe the truth, it is all we can reasonably expect. In this case no honest man willing to do his duty, can fall into a fatal error. And if the evidence were increased an hundredfold, it could not profit men determined to embrace no opinions inconsistent with an unholy life.

2. If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the truth of the doctrines which he taught, and the reality of the character which he claimed as the Son of God and the Judge of the world, are fully established. It cannot for a moment be admitted, that a God of truth would sanction the pretensions of an impostor by raising him from the dead according to his own prediction, and by confirming, in the most unequivocal manner, the testimony of the witnesses who announced this fact. In a word the resurrection of Christ is a confirmation of the truth of the whole Christian system—It is so connected with other facts and doctrines recorded in the Bible,

that the establishment of this single point carries with it the certainty of other important truths, taught in the same sacred records. If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the doctrines taught by the Apostles, as well as those proceeding from the lips of our Lord himself, are true. For if the testimony of the Apostles confirmed by the demonstrations of the Holy Ghost be worthy of belief, no sufficient reason can be assigned why they ought not to be believed, when they profess to deliver doctrines received from their Lord and Master, or suggested by the Spirit of truth which He promised—To admit that their testimony in the one case is true, and to affirm that in the other they spoke and wrote as fallible men under the influence of ignorance and prejudice, is to confound all moral distinctions, and to leave us without any means of distinguishing truth from falsehood—Why, for example, should we believe the Apostle John when he assures us, that Jesus rose from the dead, and not yield the same credence when he tells us that Jesus Christ *is the propitiation for our sins*? As the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost attended the preaching of the Apostles, it is reasonable to suppose, that when they wrote to the same persons to whom the proofs of their Apostleship had been exhibited, they would be restrained from gross and fatal error.

When they professed to be under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we know not why they should not be believed. The written communications of an ambas-

sador, who has exhibited his credentials to a foreign Court are received as the communications of the government, which he represents, until official notice is given, that he has departed from his instructions—When was the power of working miracles, the seal of their commission, withdrawn from the Apostles?—We are bound then to receive the doctrines which the Apostles professed to teach under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, as the will of God duly authenticated.

3. Finally in the resurrection of Christ we have a practical demonstration of the resurrection of the human body. The same power which raised Jesus from the dead is able also to collect and re-organize our scattered dust—The same truth, which foretold the resurrection of our Lord, is also pledged for the fulfilment of the declaration—that *all who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth : They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.*

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DISCOURSE IX.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.—2 Cor. iii. 11.

IN the passage of scripture before us, the dispensations of Moses and of Jesus Christ are presented in contrast. In the context, one is called a ministration of death, the other, of life:—one a ministration of condemnation; the other, of justification. And in the text, one is represented as temporary; the other, perpetual. Both are glorious:—but one is like the “cloudy, fiery pillar” which attended the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness; the other is like the sun, going forth in its strength, and, with a brightness never diminished, shedding light through the whole world.

The text, then, is entirely appropriate to the subject of discourse selected for the present occasion; and, taken in its connection, supports the following general proposition :

THE GOSPEL IS PRE-EMINENTLY GLORIOUS, BECAUSE IT CONTINUES WITHOUT CHANGE ; AND AFFORDS BLESSINGS IN PERPETUITY, TO ALL WHO ARE WILLING TO RECEIVE THEM.

By the gospel, is here meant the system of religion revealed in the Bible ; the method of saving sinners, with all its accompaniments and illustrations, just as they are contained in the sacred scriptures, without human additions or subtractions.

That this religion is glorious ; that, compared with all others, it "exceeds in glory," is matter of assured belief to every christian. Because, according to his full conviction, it is an emanation from the eternal source of all wisdom and goodness. And it will continue, amidst all the changes of human opinion, "without variableness or the shadow of turning," to dispense its blessings to man : because infinite power and divine veracity are pledged to sustain it. All this the christian entirely believes. So that, amidst the fierce assaults, and the fiercer threats of Infidelity, the anxiety of the believer does not arise from apprehension that his religion will be destroyed.—This can never be.—But he fears lest men, whom he loves, should cut themselves off from all the blessings, which the gospel provides ; and bring on themselves all the fearful evils, which it foretells.

To those, who have not made up their minds either to embrace or reject the gospel, it may be well to observe, that its perpetuity and unchangeableness are not the

mere results of arbitrary power ; but belong to it as a system suited in its nature to bless man at all times, and in all stages of his existence. It possesses the character of him, whose name is LOVE ; and who never changes.

But it seems necessary, here, to remark, that the whole argument on which reliance is to be placed in this discourse, will fail to make its proper impression, unless an objection, which has frequently been made, should be previously removed. Systems of religion, it is said, have risen up, and *had their day* ; but in the progress, or the changes, of the human mind, they have passed off, and are now unknown and forgotten.—And why may not this be the case with christianity ? The answer is easy.—Because christianity, as a system of religion, is perfectly unique ; and differs, in many material points, from every other form of religion current among men.

1. It addresses itself directly to reason and conscience. It relies entirely on evidence to support the facts on which it is founded ; and commends its doctrines and precepts to all the best feelings of our nature.

2. It puts no inordinate value, it lays no stress on mere forms and outward observances. The claims of other religions are satisfied, when their prescribed rites are duly performed. According to the religion of the Bible, all external services are acceptable, precisely in proportion as they express conformity of heart to the divine will.

3. Christianity not only disclaims Enthusiasm, Faticism, and Superstition ; but when prevailing in its purity and power, affords the only real security against those desolating evils. It so regulates the religious principle by its truths ; its doctrines so satisfy the reason of man, and take hold of the conscience with a grasp of such power, that no opportunity is left open for these irregular and violent excitements.

4. The religion of the Bible lays no restraints, the design of which is not clearly benevolent. It enjoins no penances, requires no austerities ; but recognizing every where man's desire of happiness, it bids him abstain from nothing, which infinite wisdom does not know to be injurious ; requires him to do nothing, which our kind Father in heaven does not see will work for his good.

5. The great founder of this religion has made all the duties, which grow out of man's various relations, a part of his system. As long as there are husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbours, and friends, and fellow-men, so long christianity will be adapted to the condition and circumstances of man. But it also institutes new relations. It makes, indeed, the human race, however diversified, and however scattered, all one family—and offers to all one Saviour, through whom the whole species are encouraged to approach one mercy-seat, and say OUR FATHER *who art in heaven*. It thus establishes an universal brotherhood ; it throws a golden chain of love round this

whole world. It was the just and very striking remark of the celebrated Madame de Stael, that if the author of christianity had never taught men any thing else, than just to say "Our Father who art in heaven," he would have been the greatest benefactor, that ever appeared on earth.

6. This religion acknowledges no *priest*, but *one* ; our GREAT HIGH PRIEST, who has passed into the heavens. There are, under the gospel, none taken from among men, who, invested with divine authority, may modify their religion to suit the changes of human opinion. The *whole* of christianity is recorded in this blessed volume, which is in the hands of all disciples, and is to be made known, by the successful agency of a noble Society, to all that dwell on earth. The Bible, carrying on it the impress of divinity, the broad seal of heaven, the stamp of eternity, will go into all lands, and speak every where the same words of eternal truth. Genuine christianity is the same now, that it was in the days of Paul.

There is no other religion like it. The passing away of dissimilar systems, then, affords no proof ;—no not the shadow of a presumption, that this, which differs from them all, will also pass away. Because the places of sand and sea-weed on the shore are changed by every rising tide, it does not therefore follow that the solid rocks will be removed. The gospel stands before the world, as an imperishable monument of the divine wisdom and benignity—And this, as will be shown, not

merely because omnipotence is pledged for its support. *But because it is of universal adaptation, and most beneficent efficiency.*

Before particular arguments are brought forward to support this proposition, I wish to submit a general remark. The christian religion does not present the appearance of a system devised to suit the selfish purposes of its author, and the application of power or fraud, to compel, or seduce, a timid and ignorant rabble to comply with its precepts. On the contrary, it takes human nature as it actually is ; and, disregarding all adventitious differences, it enters into the inner man, and speaks to all the same language ; addresses in all the same principles and feelings ; and supplies, every where, the same wants of this dying, immortal, rational, accountable being. It recognizes his profoundest moral feelings, the mighty movements of his spirit, and every thing in him, which loves to grapple with infinity, and rejoices in the thoughts of eternity, and longs after immortality. It shows an intimate acquaintance with his deepest musings, his most retired thoughts, the agonizing throes and throbbings of his soul, when the flesh contends with the spirit, and the spirit with the flesh ; when he feels the entanglements and enticements of worldly pleasure, and is powerfully attracted by the lying vanities of life, but yet knows that he has a nature allied to heaven, and is an heir of eternity ; when the dark cloud of guilt hangs over his heart, and truth is only like the lightning flash, which

shows the fearfulness of the coming storm. The deep anxieties, the soul-shaking terrors, the envenomed stings of remorse, all in a word that guilt suffers, and the greater torments which it fears, are perfectly known to the Bible; as well as every feeling of ingenuous repentance, every purpose of holy living, every kindling up of hope, every anticipated joy of eternal life. In this sacred word of eternal truth, we find a power of thoroughly searching the heart; a perfect knowledge of every thing in man, which compels us to believe that he who made him made the Bible also.

It is a remarkable fact, too, that they who carefully study the authentic records of the christian religion, and feel the power of its truths, possess a more extensive and accurate knowledge of human nature,* and have far worthier thoughts of the value of man, and man's interests, than any other persons whatsoever. And this, without any exception, wherever the Bible is circulated, and the religion taught in it prevails. This leads to the first argument in support of our general proposition.

I. Christianity is adapted to all climates, to all periods, to all conditions of human existence: and produces, wherever it prevails, the same effects.

For proof, an appeal is made to facts. This religion began in Jerusalem: it spread to Antioch: and

* At any rate they have more self-knowledge than others. A strong minded, but unlettered native of Africa, brought to this country before the nefarious slave-trade was broken up, when describing to the preacher the effect produced on himself by the Bible, used these remarkable words — *Why Massa, it turned my heart inside out, and showed me every thing in it.*

thence made its victorious progress through "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," even to Troas. It then passed over to Macedonia and Greece, and made its lodgment in Amphipolis, in Thessalonica, in Phillippi, in Corinth, in Athens. Imperial Rome herself soon felt its power, and converts to the faith were numerous in the metropolis of the world. Churches were also established in ancient Spain, in Gaul, and in the British Islands. The doctrine of Christ pervaded Egypt and the whole of civilized Africa—and went far to the East. And so at this day, it is found in all the various climates, by which the divine wisdom has seen fit to diversify the physical condition of man.

It is also suited to all classes of the human intellect, and to every variety of human character. We know that the first preachers of this religion were the fishermen of Galilee; and that numbers of females in humble life, of mechanics, and soldiers, were disciples of Christ. It is equally well known that "honourable women not a few," men of learning, of military fame, and imperial connections, priests and philosophers, became "obedient to the faith." Sergius Paulus, Dionysius the Areopagite, and many others might here be mentioned. But Paul the apostle of the gentiles may stand for all. His enlarged views, his unbounded devotion to the cause of Christ, his fervent charity, his untiring labours, his intrepid zeal, and the wonderful effects of his preaching among all classes of people, show him to have been, as Longinus declared that he

was, *no common man*.* While therefore the gospel has the glory of a peculiar adaptedness to the condition of the feeble, the poor, and the afflicted; it seems to be equally well suited to the highest stations, and the most exalted understandings.

* Some farther remarks on the character of Paul, which, for want of time, were omitted in the delivery of the sermon, are thrown into the following note :

One of the most striking traits in the character of this extraordinary man was his readiness to understand, and his promptness to enter into, the great design of Jesus Christ to give the world a universal religion. His mind, with wonderful facility, threw off the prejudices of his Jewish education, and expanded to the vastness of this enterprise. It is remarkable, too, that after he had cast off the yoke of Jewish ceremonies, and abandoned his first religious connections, he manifested no bitterness of spirit towards his former friends. On the contrary his kindness was unwearied, and his disposition to accommodate his practice to their prejudices, as far as he could do so without sacrifice of christian principle, was remarkable. Perhaps a higher example of firmness united with liberality was never exhibited by any mere man.

His history shows, also, a noble instance of intellectual and moral courage. His design most evidently was to spread the gospel through the whole world.—Rom. i. 5. He went to his work in full expectation of success, without any human means, but the use of reason and persuasion. His confidence in the power of truth seems to have been unlimited and unwavering.

His physical courage was of the highest order. There never was a bolder or braver man. His activity and industry were indefatigable. No man of common discernment can read his writings without believing his sincerity—his sacrifice of personal ease, wealth, pleasure, honour, and all worldly considerations, was unhesitating and entire. He was firm and devoted in his friendships, and ardent in his benevolence. His lofty spirit towered amidst the persecutions which he had to endure. In no emergency did his self-possession forsake him : and it is impossible not to admire his dignified and majestic calmness, under heavy accusations before the great men and nobles of the world. Among all the fine subjects for the pencil furnished by the Bible, there is scarcely one more worthy of an artist of the first order, than Paul, as he stood before Festus and king Agrippa, and said, while he raised his arms, and gently shook his chains, “I would to God, that not only thou, but all who hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether, such as I am, EXCEPT THESE BONDS.”

His power as a public speaker was certainly very great. The proof is found in his success. He persuaded innumerable multitudes to believe what they were predisposed to reject; and to do that, to which antecedently they had a strong aversion. As a writer, he has been studied and admired, in every age, from his own down to the present:—and this although his style is abrupt, involved, and harsh. In his manner of reasoning, too, there is something very peculiar; and exceedingly unlike that of the polished writers of antiquity. But a just consideration of this case will exalt his character in the estimation of every impartial observer. The Jews, at that time, were dispersed in great

The case is just the same in modern times. We daily see this blessed religion going like a ministering angel, with both hands loaded with blessings, into the cottages of the humble and uninstructed. And beginning with living men of talent and genius, we can go through a long catalogue of splendid names, the connecting links between human and spiritual existence, up to Boyle and Bacon, and other master spirits, who led the van, in the present march of the human mind.

numbers through all parts of the Roman empire, were much favoured by the emperors, and in every considerable city had their synagogues. And history assures us that multitudes of the heathen, disgusted with their polytheism, frequented these Jewish places of worship; and were accustomed to hear their scriptures read; and to listen to the comments of their doctors.—Acts. xv. 21. The Jewish style of writing and manner of reasoning, then, were familiar to all, both hellenistic Jews and gentiles, who were first converted to Christ. The apostle, therefore, felt it to be his duty to address them in a way conformable to their habits of speaking, and modes of thinking on the subject of religion. And to appreciate his value as a writer, or even to understand his reasoning, one must take the trouble to become well acquainted with his peculiarities. Certainly, he who has refused to do this, is no more prepared to judge of his writings, than he would be to criticise Homer, on reading Cowper's or Pope's translation.

If a man, whose power was deeply felt by the age in which he lived; and whose writings, though few in number, and composed, in the manner of familiar and confidential letters, amidst many labours and perils, yet have lived from age to age for eighteen centuries, and through this long succession of generations, have exerted, and do still exert, a powerful influence on thousands and millions—if such a man is not, in every proper sense of the term, *truly great*, where shall we find one who is; and, what are the criteria and the evidences of greatness?—Who can help pitying the intellectual waywardness of those, who call the apostle Paul a “*dupe*?”

But let any one read the writings of Paul, with an honest desire to ascertain their moral influences—let him mark the sincerity which characterizes every sentence; the abhorrence of fraud, deceit, and hypocrisy, every where conspicuous: the strong terms in which reliance on mere religious forms and ceremonies is reprobated; and the urgent manner in which honesty, industry, temperance, chastity, kindness, forgiveness, and universal charity, as well as sincere piety, are recommended—let him, I say, mark well all these things, and he will be able to judge of the moral obliquity of those, who can bring themselves to represent the apostle Paul as an “*impostor*.”

We can also turn to the history of the Moravian missionaries, and see those excellent brethren, seeking in the farthest north the snow-built huts of the Greenlanders ; or traversing the burning plains of southern Africa, in search of the Caffres and Hottentots, and by no human means, but the simple preaching of the gospel, transforming these lowest and harshest of human beings into humble, gentle, pure, kind-hearted christians.

Our own brethren, too, and the particular friends, no doubt, of some here present, have gone to the "scattered and peeled" children of our western forests, of whom both the sport and the occupation was war, and by the power of the gospel have made them sons of peace : they have gone to the islands of the sea, and have transformed the inhabitants, though sunk into the last degree of ignorance and sensuality, into intelligent, chaste, and charitable men : they have shown us, too, that the degraded Hindû can be washed from the pollutions of the Indian Moloch, and raised into manhood, so as to break the iron oppression of *caste*, and assert his liberty as a man and a christian.

This religion is indeed of universal adaptation. There is no mind so great, that christianity cannot fill it with its truths ; no reason so exact, that it cannot satisfy it with its evidences ; no aspirations so lofty, that it cannot answer them with corresponding glory and felicity. Nor is there any ignorance of savage man too profound for its instructions ; any stain of guilt too dark and

deep for its sanctifying power ; any misery so extreme, as to be beyond the reach of its consolations. Let there but be faith in its doctrines, and obedience to its precepts, and it will bless all, from the monarch on his throne to the slave in his cabin, or the prisoner in his dungeon : from him whose mind is filled with all the stores of human knowledge, to the poor naked savage, who has not yet learned the use of fire.

II. *The gospel is adapted to all parts of man's intellectual and moral nature.*

1. Assuming the existence of the Deity, and all the truths of natural religion, it leads its votary through all the beauties and glories of creation, and teaches him that all this loveliness and magnificence is only a spark struck out from the everlasting source of light and love. But it advances to a higher and more recondite knowledge : it tells man of "things not seen and eternal ;" it unveils the glories of infinite wisdom and mercy ; reveals the counsels of the Almighty ; gives enlarged views of the moral administration of the universe—*and in a word, applies the strongest stimulus to the human mind ; gives the widest range to human thoughts.*

The sacred books of the christians, too, contain many specimens of the noblest writing in the world. There is no poetry, no eloquence, no history, no graphic delineation of human character, like that to be found in the Bible.

The justness of all these remarks will be apparent to him who considers the fact, that wherever the Bible

is generally diffused, there is wakened up a general spirit of improvement among the people. Common schools are well supported. The population is intelligent. The wealthy classes feel the pressure of those below them in their efforts to rise; and *the higher education* flourishes. It is in such circumstances, that we often see suddenly springing even from the lowest ranks of society, men, in whom there has been kindled an ethereal fire, which bears them upward. They rise in a column of pure and heavenly light, which sheds brightness through the land, and sends its radiance even to distant nations and ages.

The founder of christianity manifested his love of improvement, and conferred on mankind a benefit, the value of which is yet unacknowledged, when he made his church a school, and ordained that the gravest, the kindest, the holiest, and wisest of his disciples, should be teachers. This is the peculiar and appropriate office of the ministers of this religion. It is a deplorable and most mischievous perversion of the ordinance of Jesus Christ, when they assume to be priests, and, by virtue of their authority, to convey, through rites and ceremonies, spiritual benefits to the people. But when by plain, strong, and manly expositions of christian doctrine and duty; by vigilant and faithful attention to the interests of education in every department, they communicate the most important information to young and old in all classes of society; they then "fulfil their ministry," and are blessings indeed to the people. The

gospel, which on divine authority has instituted such a course of perpetual instruction, has ensured to mankind a greater amount of valuable improvement, at a cheaper rate, than has ever been in any other way afforded. All enlightened christians with reason glory in the gospel as the religion of intellectual improvement.

2. *The suitableness of the gospel to the condition of man is apparent from its treatment of his affections and passions.* The authors of other systems have, in regard to this difficult and delicate point, run into various errors, and opposite extremes. They have destroyed that balance of the human mind, which is necessary to peace and virtue ; and under the character of public teachers have done incalculable mischief to the world. But the founder of christianity has taken man as a being compounded of matter and mind, with reason, conscience, passion, and appetite ; and has treated him according to his natural constitution. This religion is equally removed from stoical or monkish severity, and epicurean licentiousness. It does not exterminate any principle of our nature, or indulge any evil propensity ; but with most consummate wisdom and benevolence, it regulates the wonderful machinery of man.

A volume would not afford more than room enough for the discussion of this one topic. In a single discourse, only a very few particular cases can be selected for illustration. Let us first take *love*, that delightful, tormenting, ennobling, degrading passion. Its ordi-

nary effects, when supremely fixed on worldly objects, are too well known to be here described. It is the religion of the Bible only, which turns it at once on objects worthy to be loved by rational and immortal beings. All other religions present their deities as objects of fear and terror. The gospel reveals one eternal Jehovah, the kind parent of all, as slow to wrath and abundant in mercy. It sets him forth in the infinite glories of his moral character, and awakens our highest, purest, holiest love to him, by bringing down to our very senses the strongest proofs of his love to us. When once the heart of man answers the claim of the divine law, and is fixed on the Almighty as its all-sufficient portion, the whole nature of man is balanced and regulated; and we are prepared to love every other object, just as we ought. None manifest love so true, so tender, so unwearied in *all* the relations of life: none pursue the objects of this world with affections so tempered and so wisely directed, as they who have been brought under the full power of this blessed religion.

I shall next advert for a moment to *hope*. It has been called the "wine of life;" it has been personified as "a gay deceiver." It is certainly, to use another figure, the main-spring of the soul. It gives energy to man in all his pursuits, and elasticity to all his movements. As long as it keeps its place in the human heart, you may see man urging onward in his course, with vigorous step and joyous eye. But let it depart from him—let him feel that it is "clean gone forever,"

and he sinks at once into utter apathy ; his enterprise, his hardihood, his activity, his living spirit, are also gone. Now it requires but little knowledge of human nature to enable one to understand how important it is, that a being such as man, who cannot be happy without an object before him sufficient to create a lively interest, should have his *hopes* wisely directed. But in this case, all human wisdom has utterly failed from the beginning to the present day. Men have hoped for things unattainable ; or for things, which, when attained, have disappointed their expectations. Thus has much labour been wasted ; and in the end we have heard, ten thousand times repeated, the bitter cry of "Vanity of vanities ! vanity of vanities ! all is vanity."

But the gospel fastens the hopes of man on infinity, and eternity ; and gives for their warrant the sure promise of Jehovah, and the redeeming love of the Saviour. All other interests and pursuits are valuable, only as they subserve his great purpose of obtaining eternal life and never-fading glory. How then can his "expectation perish ?" How can the changes of this world destroy his hope ? How can the bubbles, which dance and glitter before him in the brief sunshine of worldly prosperity, deceive and mislead him ?

Once more : we find in man universally, an intense, insuppressible desire of pleasure : a constant craving for present gratification. It is more manifest in the young than the old ; because youth *lives* on actual enjoy-

ment, and old age on *reflection*. But the desire is felt, the demand is made by all.

Now all experience and observation convince us, that here is one of the most fearful dangers to which human nature is exposed. Other enemies slay their thousands, but this its ten thousands. Alas, how many hapless youth in this city, and this nation, are at this moment going after this syren "as the ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through their liver!" "Her house is" indeed "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death!" How many thousands, urged by the desire of present gratification, have looked "on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright;" who have even "tarried long at the wine, and have gone to seek mixed wine;"—and thus, "have woe, have sorrow, have contentions, have wounds without cause, and redness of eyes?"—Believe it, young friends, that which stands before you now, in grace and beauty, is decked with meretricious charms. You are deceived.—Pleasure! She is the fellest fiend that ever led man to destruction. The great *destroyer* has no minister of evil so faithful, so successful. Her dwelling is near to the gates of hell.

But it may be asked, shall this desire of pleasure never be gratified—must the demand be forever resisted; and man live an austere, joyless life, during his appointed time on earth? I answer, assuredly not. Those good christians, who think it their most solemn duty to be

miserable, have greatly mistaken the genius of their religion. It is none of the least of the blessings, which christianity has bestowed on man, that it has afforded to him an endless succession of *innocent* pleasures. The gospel, when it comes in its power to the human heart, so changes it, that man can be excited, and deeply interested, yea rendered alert and joyous, without the "snappish dialogue" and buffoonery of the theatre; without the pungent stimuli of strong drink; or any of the purchased indulgences of the sensualist. The religion of Christ gives to the christian pleasure without pollution, daily, hourly, pure, uncloying, ever growing pleasure. It allows every thing to natural desire, which is not injurious; and intermingles with gratifications derived from this source, others which flow from the everlasting fountain of joy in heaven. It is most particularly beneficial to the young, in the ardour and vehemence of their desires; because it answers their incessant and urgent demands for something of high interest, something corresponding to the intensity of their feelings. And it is wonderfully adapted to the condition of the aged; because, even when *life is worn out*, it still presents to them objects of hope, so glorious, that they can stir the sluggish currents of age, and kindle up in its cold heart the ardour of youth.

III. *The beneficent and wise adaptation of this religion to the nature of man is apparent from its operation on his conscience.*

In pointing out the difference between christianity and other forms of religion, it was remarked, that it directs its main force to the reason and conscience of man. Its value, in this respect, is apparent from the fact, that the conscience, from want of proper discipline and exercise, may be inert and feeble: and also that, under powerful excitement, it may be deplorably misdirected. Instead of guiding us into the way of virtue and piety, it may mislead us then to our utter ruin. Hence it is of unspeakable importance, that we should have access to truth, which has power to awaken the slumberer within us. The Bible has that power, and it has been exerted times without number. It is the voice of the Almighty, speaking directly to us: it tells us, with divine authority, what we are, and what we must do, and be, and avoid, that we may escape the perdition of ungodly men, and be prepared to dwell with "the saints in glory." It strikes on the heart of the sinner, even "when dead in trespasses and sins," and sends a thrill of powerful feeling through his whole soul. His moral torpor is gone. He is awakened. He is *all alive*. But the effect of evangelical truth is not mere excitement. By the communication of knowledge respecting our Creator, our relations and obligations to him, and to one another, our moral faculties are most wisely directed. The harmony of all man's duties is most beautifully displayed. His whole intellectual and moral nature is admirably balanced. And we see, in the well instructed christian, an edifying and

delightful example of fervent piety, united with calm, dignified, and incorruptible virtue. In the best human characters, formed under any other influences, we discern, either most hurtful excesses, or deplorable deficiencies. In the warrior and statesman, we find patriotism sadly intermingled with ambition, envy, jealousy, and other evil passions. Most distinguished philosophers have been notorious for pride, vanity, and even sensuality. And universally, where the power of christian truth has not been felt on the heart, the most estimable individuals have shown the operations of selfishness, in some way or other marring their moral character. But the religion of the Bible embraces, in the wide range of its influences, every part of the human mind, and every department of human life. Nothing is necessary to make man all that he ought to be, to give its finish to the human character, and adorn it with every grace and beauty, but the sincere, hearty application of the entire truth of the gospel.

4. But again : *no religion knows what to do with the guilty and troubled conscience, but the religion of the gospel.*

It is not enough for the religious teacher to tell me to be virtuous and pious ; for, I am a sinner. It is not sufficient that he should tell me to repent ; because, while conscious of the imperfection of my best performances, I never can be assured that my penitence goes as far as is necessary. There are many sins which I have wholly forgotten : many, which I very indistinctly re-

member. I am under the influences of self-love, the worst judge, perhaps, in the universe, of the aggravation of my own offences. Besides, I cannot perceive the relation which exists between present penitence and past offences, so as to see how the one can nullify the other. The doctrine of repentance alone, then, is worse than nothing to him, who deeply feels that he is "a sinner exceedingly great before the Lord." It does not awaken hope enough in man's heart, to make him a sincere penitent. And while it is insufficient for his reformation, it is incapable of giving him peace of conscience.

But the gospel addresses the guilty in the voice of divine authority, mingled with divine love. It tells him of the infinite atonement; it assures him of mercy, which knows no bound; of mercy, displayed in consistency with all the demands of justice, and with the perfect holiness of our eternal Sovereign.

5. *The gospel is wonderfully adapted to the nature of man, because the unlimited reach of its truths is suited to the progress of our intellectual and moral faculties.*

Such is the nature of man, that when he has attained an object, and ascertained its extent, so that he is able to say, *this is all*:—when he has found just what the thing can do for him; and knows that it can do no more, he is at once disgusted. But the truths of Christianity are ever enlarging before the mind of the believer. Let its growth be what it may, still it feels

that there is something in religion, which goes beyond his grasp, and that it gives his understanding work for eternity.

The same is true in regard to the christian's progress in holiness. In proportion as his moral taste becomes refined, and his perceptions clear, he perceives new beauties and glories in evangelical holiness; he sees a higher fitness and excellence in the moral precepts of the gospel. No mind of man, however cultivated and sanctified, goes beyond the discoveries made in the beginning, by the revelations of the gospel. After the progress of eighteen centuries, not a doctrine of this religion has become useless, not a precept obsolete. The meaning of the gospel is inexhaustible.

I do not say that new religious truths are discovered, in man's present state. But the case is this :—When one for the first time reads such a work as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or sees West's picture of *Christ Rejected*, if he has any taste or any feeling, he perceives many splendid beauties, and enjoys them most highly. But every new examination shows him something, which he did not discern before. In looking at the picture, for instance, it may be that he first examines the individual figures; and is subdued by the mingled majesty and meekness which appear in the Christ—or he is melted in sympathy with the impassioned Mary—or is kindled into indignation, when he beholds the envious and malignant Jews. After having studied every particular figure, he then considers the harmonies and con-

trasts of the various groupings, the propriety of their positions, and in a word, every thing which shows the genius of the painter, and the skill of the artist. The subject is not exhausted, until the spectator has comprehended the whole plan of the work, and examined thoroughly every beauty of its execution; not until he has been brought to think and feel about it, as the artist did. And so, but in a much higher degree, of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every careful study of this glorious system, shows new beauties in truths a thousand times considered—and the subject never can be exhausted, until the mind of man rises, if I may say so, to the conceptions, the thoughts, the feelings, and the great plan of its DIVINE AUTHOR.

Having thus shown that the gospel is, with admirable wisdom and benevolence, adapted to man, in all regions, in all periods, and in all conditions of human society; and moreover, that it is suited to the whole of his intellectual and moral nature, I wish, in the remaining part of this discourse, to notice some *special* blessings conferred by it, which it was not convenient to introduce under the foregoing divisions:

1. In the first place, it blesses *individuals* by giving to them an *elevation of character*, otherwise unattainable.

This is effected, not by fostering human pride and self-consequence.—To do this is to curse, and not bless.—But it is achieved by giving, in addition to all the benefits which have been enumerated, to the mind

of man, the clear and strong impress of immortality. That it does so, no one doubts. That truth, which the wisest ancient sages *groped* and *felt after*, with inexpressible anxiety to find it, is now familiar to the most unlettered christian. Even children in the sabbat schools now *know*, what it immortalized Socrates and Plato to have rendered probable. It is because they have had the lessons of him, "who spake as never man spake," for their instruction.

But to ascertain the full effect of the christian religion, in regard to the matter now under consideration, it is necessary to connect the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, with that of the immortality of the soul; and to suppose that these truths are fully believed. Let one, then, habitually realize, that he is to live forever; that he is capable of an endless progression in knowledge and holiness; that he is the heir of eternity; and that this body, which is now the instrument and organ of his mind, instead of sleeping always in kindred dust, will be raised by almighty power, and rendered immortal; that he himself, as a true, complete human being, may hold companionship with the highest and holiest of created beings, and communion with their LORD—let a man, I say, daily bring home to his "business and bosom," such thoughts as these, and they will cast his whole character in the mould of heaven, and give him, even in this world, the port and bearing of an angel of light. What, in all the range of human knowledge and thought, is so well suited to

raise man above every thing low, and sensual, and grovelling? Accordingly, if one will go into the humblest habitation of the truly pious, he will find, amidst poverty, and toil, and self-denial, persons familiar with high and noble thoughts, and enterprizes in real grandeur and magnificence, going far beyond the cherished purposes and meditations of the great ones of the earth. I have seen the tenant of a log-cabin, with a heart large enough to embrace the world, and aspirations as lofty as heaven. Every generation has admired the sublimity of the saying of the ancient artist, when he said, "I paint for eternity." There are tens of thousands of obscure and humble christians, who, with a far loftier spirit, and more dilated conceptions, are saying every day, *we LIVE for eternity*.

And yet there are not a few, I fear, among us, who try to persuade themselves and to seduce others into the belief, that they are creatures of ephemeral existence—that no morning is to rise after the night of death; that no light is to dawn on the deep darkness of the grave! Merciful Father, what desperation of guilt drives thy creatures to renounce the highest honours of their nature; and while thine own hand has stamped immortality on their brow, to grovel in the dust, and claim kindred with the worm!

2. In the next place, *the religion of the Bible has conferred on DOMESTIC LIFE its choicest blessings.*

It has done this by destroying, wherever it has gone, the endless and harassing evils of polygamy: but espe-

cially, by *making marriage a divine institution*. It deserves particular notice, that wherever the stale and wearisome clamour of *priestly influence* is raised, one of the favourite themes of reproach is, that marriage is made a *religious* rite. And even where infidelity preserves some show of decency, the effort is made to convince the people that it is a mere civil contract. It is only when miserable *creatures* have gone to the very last degree of wickedness, that it is represented as an odious monopoly. The reason of all this is perfectly understood. The sacredness of marriage is the great preservative of purity and chastity in human society. Let it be only a civil contract, dissolvable by mutual consent—or even let human laws alone sustain its perpetuity—and at once there is set to work a cause of evil, of uncontrollable energy, and boundless extent. Licentiousness, too gross to be described, would spread its pollution through every part of domestic and social life; all that gives grace and dignity to woman; every thing in her that charms and solaces us when we retire from the world, into the privacies of the family circle, would be blasted and consumed by the fierce, unhallowed fires of sensuality. The son would be ignorant of his mother, the daughter of her father. From these desolating and horrible evils, we are preserved by the sanctity which religion gives to marriage.

Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In paradise of all things common else.
By thee adulterous lust was driven from men,

Among the bestial herds to range ; by thee
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother first were known.

It is of these charities, and all the blessed influences of a chaste, hallowed, and sanctified domestic life, that the modern infidelity, cast forth among us by the convulsions of Europe, with its callous heart and ruthless hand, would rob us. It would persuade us, that our long tried and faithful pastors, are knaves and impostors ; that the bands of marriage are galling chains ; that the benediction of our nuptial contract is a piece of priestly mummary ; and that in the midst of what we have always thought to be true bliss, of our "fireside enjoyments" and "homeborn happiness," we have all along been poor miserable slaves ! Such are the ravings of itinerant sceptics :—such is the desperate fanaticism of Infidelity !

But to return : the gospel blesses domestic life by determining the relative situation of husband and wife, of parent and children. It settles the point, that the husband is the head of the wife : but it requires him to love her as he does himself, and give her honour as the "weaker vessel." It commands children at all times to render to parents reverence and obedience ; but it forbids parents to exercise authority with harshness. It gives one law of love to the whole family ; it sheds on them its selectest influence ; it connects them all with the great family of heaven, and with the hopes and glories of eternity. In estimating the value of these blessings

on domestic life, we are greatly assisted in forming a just conclusion, by viewing in contrast, the families of christians and heathens.

In the former, authority is tempered with love : woman takes her place as the helpmeet of man : children mingle affectionate confidence with filial reverence : the intercourse of all is free, easy, joyous : their pleasures are pure and simple : and their hopes take the lofty character of eternity.

But where christianity has not exerted its kindly influences, woman is the minister of man's pleasure, and his children are slaves. He reigns a dark and stern tyrant ; his house is a domestic Bastile, rather than a homestead ; and is ruled by physical strength, instead of the law of love.*

3. *The gospel bestows its peculiar blessings on social life.* A community made up of individuals—such as the gospel, in its proper influences, forms—whose understandings are excited, whose conscience is instructed, and whose passions are regulated, must indeed be happy. But on these considerations we have not time now to dwell.

I wish here to notice, what I have not seen stated elsewhere, that the power of the gospel is great in producing real refinement and genuine politeness, in social intercourse. Much of the refinement of this world con-

* It is remarkable that in nominally christian countries, where the Bible is taken away from the people, and its influences on domestic life are unknown, females generally think it a privilege rather than a hardship to be placed in convents. The reason is, they suffer so much from the tyranny of the stronger sex.

sists in presenting gross ideas in what are thought delicate terms. Wit is displayed by making one feel as disagreeable and ridiculous as possible, without giving what the laws of honour would denominate an insult. And the highest politeness is a mere mimicry of disinterestedness, for the purpose of insuring the greatest regard to *one's self*. But the religion of the Bible produces the *reality*, of which the world affords only a sorry imitation. By surrounding every human being with the glories of immortality, it causes man to regard his fellow with high consideration. By infusing its own pure benevolence, it destroys that selfishness, which seeks ease, indulgence, or applause, at the expense of another's feelings; and it prompts the wish always to promote the comfort and happiness of those with whom we have intercourse. By sanctifying the heart; by implanting the love of holiness; and by fixing man's thought and affection on "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," it raises him above that sensuality, which pollutes the mind, and which retains its proper character, whether it comes through the channel of coarse and vulgar ribaldry, or the polite vocabulary of licentiousness.

The religion of the gospel alone, purifies all the fountains of social life; and produces that uniform gentleness, and meekness, those "kind designs to serve and please," which give the highest charms, and the most enchanting graces to social intercourse.

4. The plan which I have adopted, obliges me to advert to the benefits conferred by the religion of Christ, on man in the relations of *civil life*. Its value in giving new sacredness to "an oath for confirmation ;" in clothing human laws with a power, which no human legislature could give ; its peculiar appropriateness to a free government, in which the rights of all are recognised ; and in which habits of self-government in the citizen are of unspeakable importance ; are topics of common discussion ; and have just for a moment been brought to view in this place, for the purpose of assisting the hearer in forming an adequate view of the value of the gospel.

I cannot, however, do justice to my own feelings, without declaring it to be my full conviction, that complete civil and political liberty, such as we understand it to be, never has been, and never will,—nay, never *can* be enjoyed by any people, without the influences of pure christianity. Sure I am, that in the most celebrated republics of the heathen world, there was nothing like the degree of true, rational, well balanced, and well secured freedom, which is now the birthright of the people of this country. I am equally sure, that, if ever the day should come, when the religion of the gospel shall cease to be the prevalent religion of this nation, the splendid temple of Liberty, erected by the labour and skill of our forefathers, and cemented by their blood, will be shattered to pieces by a dreadful and wide-wasting convulsion, and scattered over the surrounding

desolation, as the polished fragments of the great city of the desert, are scattered over the burning sands of Syria. And I feel that while I am attempting, in this humble manner, to discharge the offices of a christian minister, I am at the same time performing one of the most sacred duties of a citizen—contributing, according to my feeble ability, to perpetuate the institutions of my country.

But while I forbear to enter into the interesting subjects, at which we have just glanced, there is one particular topic, which I cannot wholly pass over. *The pure gospel of Jesus Christ affords the only security for the preservation of the dearest right of a freeman, his religious liberty.*

Human legislators may make laws for the “security of religious freedom,” and they may repeal them. For myself, if the majority of the people of the United States were decidedly anti-christian, I could not rely on the law of the land to protect my life and person, while pursuing what I do now believe to be a course of christian duty. If, for very shame, the constitution should remain unaltered, public sentiment would not enforce that part of it, which guaranties my christian liberty. We see enough of the bitterness of infidelity, we hear enough of its “deep” curses, to assure us, that its prevalence would speedily tear down our altars, and desecrate our churches. It was in no remote period of the world, nor was it among a savage and ignorant people, that Infidelity, with the malignity of a fiend, adjudged the ministers of religion, without trial or defence,

to death on the lamp-post. Its spirit is unaltered. And even now, when restrained by law, and by public sentiment enforcing that law, we can hear its growl, like that of a tiger in a cage. The very freedom of speech, which it owes to the influence of christianity on this nation, is employed in calumniating the Bible, and traducing all who believe its sacred truths. Christians have tokens enough to show them what they may expect, if Infidelity should gain the ascendancy.

It would be easy to trace, in ten thousand ways, the influences of the gospel in securing liberty of religion. It clearly enough denies to man any authority over the conscience. It makes religion a personal concern, and teaches every one, that he is to give account *for himself* to his Maker. It comes to every individual, and plainly tells him what he is to believe and to do, that he may be saved, and solemnly charges him to judge of the doctrine of every religious teacher, by the plain truths, which are continually before him. And while it thus informs the conscience, and makes man feel the inexpressible value of religious freedom, it wakens up a spirit, which human authority cannot put down—which human power cannot subdue—which rises in its strength against the whole apparatus of tyranny, and looks undaunted on the stake and the wheel, the faggot and the fire. Since men first felt that they had a right to freedom of conscience, they who have maintained this right at every peril, amidst all reproaches and sufferings, have been devoted, evangelical christians. Philosophical

statesmen, borrowing without acknowledgment, their thoughts from pious christians, have reasoned well respecting the abstract right, when, in perfect security, they have had nothing to interrupt the course of their meditations: but *they were christians*, who offered themselves willingly to the sword, and gave their bodies to the flames, that they might thus seal their testimony to the truth, that there is no lord of conscience, but the eternal Sovereign of the universe. If any doubt of these facts, let them tell us where, in all the world, has religion been free, while the gospel has been unknown, or kept back from the people. In *every other case*, the miserable and oppressed people have thought, that the religion of the state was good enough for them.

I have thus shown that the gospel, by its adaptation to all climates, all ages, all conditions of human life, and to all the faculties of the human mind, dispenses blessings, which can be bestowed in no other way, through every department of human life; and that it EXCELS IN GLORY, because, from its very nature, it is unchangeable, and confers its benefits without measure, and without end, to all who are willing to receive them. Its great design is to pardon, to sanctify, and to save sinners. It finds them in guilt and misery; takes them "out of the horrible pit and the miry clay;" places them in the king's highway of holiness; and scatters its blessings all along the path, by which it conducts them to heaven.

But, after all, the gospel is a system but partially known to us. Our faculties are feeble ; and this dark world is between us and that glorious orb of light. I am just holding up my little spy-glass for you to look through : and you see—O ! do you not see, all round the dim edge of this globe, the breakings over, and the streamings of a light, which shows what is behind ? The brief hour of this eclipse will, however, soon, very soon, pass away ; and then a flood of glory will pour on you, and your fellow-christians around you. All will be transformed into the same image. And when that great multitude, which no man can number, gathered out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb ; and when he shall be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all that believe ; when cherubim and seraphim shall crowd around to learn new wonders concerning *their* Lord, and the *sinner's* Saviour, and shall behold them reflecting his light, resplendent in his image—*then*, and not till then, shall we form some adequate conception of the glory of the gospel.

DISCOURSE X.

THE PROVINCE OF REASON IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—Let my cry come before thee, O Lord: give me understanding according to thy word.—Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;—give me understanding, and I shall keep thy word.—PSALM. cxix. 105. 169. 33, 34.

THE pious king of Israel is here presented before us, as conscious of his own ignorance, and desirous of receiving divine instruction. Though he was possessed of high mental endowments, and though, compared with others, he was distinguished for his acquisitions in spiritual knowledge; he yet felt himself to be a mere *learner*, and devoutly applied to God as his teacher.

I shall consider this example of David as casting light on the important subject, which has been assigned to me for the present occasion; namely, *the province of reason in matters of religion*. If it was suitable for

such a man as David, to take the place of a *learner*, it must be suitable for us.

Our merciful Creator, who has undertaken to be our teacher, gives us instruction by his *works*, and by his *word*. By his works in the material and in the spiritual world, he teaches us those truths which constitute *Natural Theology*. By his word, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, he casts a clearer light on the truths of Natural Theology, and, in addition to this, teaches those doctrines, which constitute *Christianity*, relating chiefly to the sin and ruin of man, and to the character and work of the Redeemer. There is, moreover, an inward, spiritual illumination and guidance, which God affords to all sincere believers. The object of this divine influence is, not to reveal new truths; for since the word of God was completed, this is unnecessary;—but to remove those hindrances to knowledge which are found in the disordered state of our minds, and so to direct our intellectual and moral faculties, as to enable us to understand and love the spiritual truths which are already revealed.

Were God a *malevolent* being, we might expect him to make false displays of himself, to lead us into mistaken views, and to make deception the means of tormenting us. But we are so happy as to believe and to know, that our God is a God of truth, and that all the manifestations he makes of himself, both in his word and works, are worthy of perfect confidence; so that

the business which remains for us, is to sit, as humble learners, before our divine and all-wise teacher, and to receive instruction from him.

The subject, brethren, on which I am now called to address you, is constantly and in a high degree interesting to us, whether we meditate, or converse ; whether we seek knowledge ourselves, or endeavor to communicate it to others. The right use of our reason, within its proper province, will contribute to our own welfare, and to the welfare of our fellow-men ; while using our reason incorrectly, or suffering it to act out of its province, will occasion incalculable evils both to ourselves and to others.

In this discussion I shall consider the word *reason*, as denoting *the power, generally, of apprehending truth, and applying it to its proper uses* ;—a power which distinguishes man from all other animated beings around him, and fits him for performing duties and enjoying pleasures, of which they are totally incapable.

I have already suggested that which I understand to be the proper employment of reason in matters of religion ; namely, to learn what God teaches ; to obtain the knowledge of the facts and doctrines which he exhibits, particularly those which he exhibits in his word ; to arrange them in a suitable order, and to apply them to their various uses.

That God is our teacher, and that he communicates instruction by his works and by his word, is one of the first lessons which human reason should learn. After

becoming satisfied of this, we are to make it our object to discover what is the instruction which he actually communicates. And as our chief concern is with the truths of revelation, our chief business is to apply ourselves, in the proper use of our rational powers, to the study of the holy Scriptures.

The position which I take on this subject will require, that two things in particular should be set aside, as not falling within the province of reason.

The first is, *attempting to originate truth*. I will explain my meaning. All the elements of our knowledge, all the materials on which our reason is to act, are furnished for our use in the works and in the word of God. These simple elements of knowledge we may combine together with almost endless variations; but we can never increase them, and should never attempt in any way to change them. They are as fixed and unalterable, as the attributes and laws of matter and mind. To originate any fact, or any doctrine, is, strictly speaking, what does not belong to us, and what human reason, however strong may be its temptation, ought never to undertake. In regard to many parts of the Christian religion, the simple doctrines and facts, which we learn from the word of God, may prove insufficient to satisfy the cravings of curiosity, or of pride; or they may be liable to objections which we cannot obviate. In such cases, after trying in vain to discover in the sacred volume the additional truth we wish for, we may be inclined to give another direction to our

intellectual powers, and to make an effort to originate or produce something, which shall afford the relief we desire. The fertility of the imagination, instead of being directed, as it should be, to the illustration of truths already known, may be put to the unnatural task of originating some principle,—of producing some notion, which may supply or seem to supply the mortifying deficiency of our knowledge, and enable us, at least in appearance, to remove the difficulties thrown in our way. In the disquietude of our minds, we may be led to suppose, that, if a certain principle could be admitted, it would obviate all objections, and reconcile all apparent differences. After venturing thus beyond the province of reason, the next step is, to meditate often, and with complacency, on the imaginary principle, till it assumes the appearance of a reality, and then to believe it. And the next step is, to contend for it, though a mere fiction, as a fundamental truth, and to expend immeasurable zeal in support of that which owed its existence to mental fermentation. Now every thing like this,—every attempt to produce a new moral or religious principle, or to make any addition to the simple doctrines and facts which God has taught us, carries us at once beyond our bounds; as much so, as an attempt to produce a new principle or fact in chemistry, or optics. Every attempt of this kind is foreign to our province as rational creatures, and is the work of a vain, hypothetical philosophy.

The other thing which must be set aside, as not belonging to the province of reason, is, *sitting in judgment upon any of the doctrines or facts, which God makes known*. If, in any case, it is inconsistent with the character of a mere learner, to judge and decide upon the truth and propriety of the instruction, which his teacher gives, it is most obviously so here, considering that the learner is a being of yesterday, who knoweth nothing; that the subjects of instruction are vast and unsearchable, and the teacher divine. For us, *children* as we are, to call in question the dictates of unerring wisdom on such subjects, is presumption and impiety in the extreme.

The remarks I have made may furnish a ready answer to a question often proposed to us by rationalists. "If," say they, "we are to bow with such submission to the word of God, and to receive so implicitly all its doctrines and precepts, and are never at liberty to call in question the reasonableness or truth of any of its dictates; then what has reason to do?" I reply, it has every thing to do, which falls within its province; every thing for which it was designed; every thing to which it is competent. In the business of receiving instruction, the human mind finds full scope for all its active powers. There is no employment which is more honorable to reason; none which requires a more diligent and intense application of its energies. The simple business of learning divine truth, or obtaining an acquaintance with revealed doctrines and facts, is ex-

tensive and exalted enough to occupy forever the sublimest intelligences in the creation.

But in pursuing the object I have in view, I propose more particularly to show, that the province which I have assigned to human reason, corresponds with its *nature*; and that our confining it to this work, will conduce directly to *the honor of God*, and to our own *intellectual and moral improvement*.

1. The province I have assigned to reason, evidently *corresponds with its nature*.

To *learn* is an employment peculiarly congenial to the essential properties of the human mind. An acquaintance with truth must, unless wickedness of heart prevent, be highly grateful to our feelings. It is this which reason, uncorrupted, would constantly crave. The mind, free from wrong bias, would be ever pressing after knowledge; would be all ear to the voice of instruction; would constantly look round with earnest desire for some one to be its teacher. And this desire, were the mind in a right state, would continue and increase, and would lead every person on earth to seek for a teacher of higher and higher qualifications, and at length, finding all human instruction insufficient, to apply to the Father of lights, with the humble prayer, *Lord, give me understanding: guide me into all truth*.

For any one to suppose, that the mind is capable of knowing things by its own inherent light, would be a great and palpable error. It is with our reason, as with

our bodily sight. The eye does not see objects by a light which emanates from itself. If left without external light, it would be in darkness forever. It finds its proper employment, not in creating the objects of its own vision, or the light by which it sees them; but simply in beholding the objects which God has created, through the medium of that light, which God causes to shine. And while we are dependent upon the light which shines upon us from without to enable us to see; it is also true, that the extent of our natural vision is increased to an inconceivable degree by the aid of optical instruments. These instruments not only give clearness to what was seen obscurely before, but enable us to discover a multitude of objects, which otherwise would have been entirely beyond our ken. So it is with reason, the intellectual eye. Instead of depending on itself, and seeing by its own inherent light, it is dependent, even for natural knowledge, on the Father of lights. For the knowledge of *religion*, it is dependent in a higher degree. Where there was only dim twilight before, divine revelation has caused the splendor of noon-day. And it has brought to view a variety of objects, and those of the greatest moment, which must have been forever unknown without it.

Every created, finite mind must, from its very nature, be dependent for all its knowledge, on the uncreated, infinite mind. While our reason is duly sensible of this, and confines itself to the business of learning what God reveals; its efforts are all natural

and safe. But whenever it leaves the place of a learner, and undertakes, by its own power, to originate any doctrine or fact; it undertakes a work which is unnatural and dangerous, and which will inevitably lead to false and hurtful conceptions.

2. Confining reason to the province which I have now assigned to it, will conduce to *the honor of God*. He is in fact the fountain of all created intelligence; and to acknowledge him as such, is only to treat him according to truth,—to render him the honor which is his due. But if we cherish the feeling, that we can know any thing of ourselves, and that it is safe to rely upon the strength of our own understanding; we rob God of his glory. Let our reason, then, always keep the attitude of a learner. Let us be aware that, properly speaking, we are not in any thing *self-taught*. With all lowliness and meekness, let us recognize our dependence on divine teaching, and gratefully ascribe to God the glory of all our acquisitions. And let us consider how greatly we shall dishonor the Father of lights, if we neglect that clear display of heavenly truth, which he has made in his word, and are perpetually running after the phantoms of imagination, or the dreams of a delusive philosophy.

3. Confining our reason to the work which I have assigned to it, will conduce directly to *intellectual improvement*.

An acquaintance with the truths of religion will enlarge and elevate our understandings; and it will pro-

duce this effect in a much higher degree, than our acquaintance with objects of inferior value. But there is no way for us to become acquainted with the truths of religion, except by learning them of our divine teacher, in the use of the means which he has appointed. We are in his school ; and the improvement of our intellectual powers will be in proportion to the docility and earnestness with which we attend to his instructions. He who is the most teachable and diligent, who keeps himself at the greatest distance from whatever is beyond the province of a learner, and attains to the clearest apprehension of the simple truths which are revealed, will raise his intellectual character to the highest degree of excellence. While he who turns aside from his proper work, and from the impulse of an unbridled curiosity, or from loftiness of heart, attempts to go beyond the lessons which are taught by the word and providence of God, will forfeit his spiritual freedom,—will experience a derangement of his rational powers, and pass at length into the region of perplexity and darkness.

I am now speaking of a fact which frequently occurs, especially among the more cultivated and intelligent. The mind is entangled with the sophistry of error, harassed with doubt, or stupified with infidelity. And this perverted state of reason is evidently owing, in a great measure, to its forsaking its proper province, and taking upon itself to know what its divine teacher has not revealed. The attempt is a dishonor to God, who has kindly given us our reason. and all the instruction

which our condition requires. It is an impeachment of his wisdom and benevolence. And as reason thus dishonors its divine teacher, and proudly chooses to be its own guide; what can be a more righteous retribution, than that he should abandon it to its own blind impulses, and let it show into what miserable extravagancies it will run, when it breaks loose from his hand. In this and in other ways, God will at length confound the pride of reason, and bring every high thought low.

4. Confining reason to its legitimate province, will contribute in the highest degree to our *moral improvement*.

It cannot, we may be sure, be necessary to the best influence of any divine truth, that we should originate it by our own reason. The circumstance of our having received it from a divine teacher will rather enhance than diminish its power to promote our improvement. —Fix your eyes upon the fair objects of creation above you and around you. Are they less fair, or less suited to make a salutary impression, because they were not produced by your own efforts?—or because the light in which you behold them does not emanate from yourselves? And can we imagine that the truths of religion are less excellent, or less useful in promoting our moral improvement, because, instead of being our own inventions, they are implicitly received from the word of God?

But the point, to which I wish you more particularly to attend, is this: *that the moral influence which is*

suited to our condition, and which is most likely to be beneficial in promoting our improvement, is the influence of those very doctrines and facts, plain and obvious as they are, which God has made known in his word. Of these I shall give a few examples.

What, then, is more plain and intelligible, and at the same time more suited to give us exalted ideas of the power and majesty of God, than the fact, that by his almighty word, he created the heavens and the earth; the simple fact, that he said, *Let there be light, let there be a world, a universe, and it was so.*

That God is every where present, and perfectly knows our actions and our hearts, is a plain, simple truth, level to the capacity of a child. Yet, when clearly apprehended and believed, it exerts a mighty and most salutary influence over the mind of man. It repels temptation, subdues the power of sin, and excites to diligence and fidelity in the service of God.

Take another doctrine. *Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever, became man, and died for our sins.* This doctrine, as might easily be shown, has a direct relation to all the duties of the Christian religion. And we find that whenever the apostles would most powerfully excite men to diligence in doing the will of God, or to patience and meekness in suffering the evils of life; they present the fact, *that Christ died for us,* as the motive.

One more example will suffice. *All the dead shall be raised at the last day, and shall receive according*

to what they have done, whether it be good or bad.

This doctrine, as set forth in the Scriptures, has a power over the mind, which language is not adequate to describe. It administers the highest comfort or alarm, and affords the most effectual aid in forming the character to purity and devotion.

If we pass in review all that God has made known to us ; the holy law he has given us ; the sin and ruin of all men in consequence of one man's disobedience ; the eternal purposes of God ; the Trinity ; the whole work of the Redeemer ; regeneration by the Holy Spirit ; the perseverance of the saints, considered as a duty on their part, and a matter of promise on God's part ; and the everlasting retributions of the future world ; we shall find, in each case, that the doctrine which produces the salutary effect is just that which God has clearly revealed, and which every person of common understanding is capable of knowing. It is the belief of the simple truths, the plain, intelligible facts taught in the Scriptures, which has raised the character of the saints to the highest elevation ; has given strength to the weak, comfort to the afflicted, and freedom to the slaves of sin ; and has prepared the people of God for the most glorious achievements.

If then we would most effectually promote our moral improvement, let us keep our place as learners. Let reason sit with humility before its heavenly teacher, boasting of no power, and desiring no honor, but that of receiving instruction from him.

But I have a farther remark ; namely, that *beyond the single business of learning, arranging, and applying to their proper uses, the obvious truths which God has revealed to us, all the efforts of reason will be totally unavailing.* Beyond the simple doctrines and facts which God has taught us, there is nothing suited to our capacity ; nothing which we are capable of understanding, or of making subservient to the purposes of life.

Take, for example, the truth suggested above, that *God is the Creator of all things.* In relation to this simple truth men have had a variety of speculations. They have inquired, *how* God creates ; *how* he makes something out of nothing ; *how* the eternal Spirit acts upon matter, and upon created minds ; and how his agency in *preserving* differs from his agency in *creating*. But such inquiries pertain to subjects beyond the sphere of our knowledge, and give rise to difficulties which we are not competent to solve. All speculations and theories, beyond the simple fact, *that God created the heavens and the earth*, are useless, and may be entirely dismissed without occasioning any loss in regard to moral improvement.

Men have also pushed their inquiries respecting *the omniscience of God* beyond the limits of their knowledge.—How does God's understanding differ in its nature from ours ? How can he know the whole succession of events from the commencement of creation through everlasting ages, without any succession or

change of thoughts in his own mind? How can he give particular attention to all the objects in the universe, without distraction, and without weariness?—Such inquiries are easily made; but who can answer them? What is peculiar to the intelligence of God in distinction from human intelligence, can be known only to God himself.

The same remarks are applicable to the doctrine, that *Christ, who was God, and by whom all things were made, became man, and died for our sins.* Men have been stimulated, by an unsanctified curiosity, to extend their knowledge beyond this simple truth, and to inquire *how* it is that the Son of God can also be God; *how* he can be a distinct person from the Father, and yet possess the same divine nature; *how* it can be consistent with the immutable principles of law and justice, for God to substitute an innocent being in the place of the guilty, and inflict overwhelming evil upon him for their offenses; and, if the human nature and divine were united in the person of the sufferer, *how* he could suffer as a man, and yet not suffer as God. Inquiries like these lead us into a region, in which our reason can have no light, and which it cannot even attempt to explore, without the danger of being bewildered and lost.

In like manner we can raise questions, to which human reason is not able to reply, respecting the identity of the resurrection body with the body which died; respecting the difference between the state of the soul

before the resurrection, and after ; the use which will be made of the senses, and other bodily powers, in the future world ; the exact manner in which God will have intercourse with the saints, and they with one another ; and the particular place of happiness for the saints, and of suffering for sinners. On such topics as these, reason cannot form clear conceptions, or free itself from difficulties ; and its attempting to do so will only involve it in greater darkness.

The same remarks would apply to *moral agency*. That we are moral agents, under law, and bound in duty to obey, and that we are justly accountable to God, is a plain and certain fact, taught by our own consciousness, and by the Scriptures ; and it is a fact of vast moment, being itself a powerful motive, and mixing as it does with all other motives, and investing them with the highest degree of influence. But in regard to moral agency, an inquisitive mind can easily raise questions which human wisdom has no power to answer, and with which rational, accountable beings have really nothing to do. They are questions of no value, as the investigation of them has never conducted, and never will conduce, in the smallest degree, to increase our sense of obligation, or to render us more penitent, or more obedient.

In a word, this pressing after knowledge beyond the simple doctrines and facts which God has revealed, is a rash adventure, in which reason must forever fail. And all attempts to acquire such knowledge are totally

useless, having no tendency to improve the understanding, or the heart. Accordingly we find that inspired men, who aimed not to gratify an unhallowed curiosity, but to teach what would be beneficial to the world, had nothing to do with matters of curiosity, or with questions which lead into the field of hypothetical reasoning,—they had nothing to do with such questions, except to stigmatize them as science falsely so called, and to turn away from them.

But I must say, moreover, that any attempt of ours to go beyond the simple doctrines and facts which we are taught by the word and providence of God, will not only prove useless, but will directly *hinder the influence of divine truth*.

Such an employment will so occupy and engross the powers of our minds, that we cannot attend as we ought to what God has actually revealed. I am greatly mistaken, if it is not a general fact, that those who indulge a fondness for abstruse, philosophical research, in matters of religion, experience a diminution of attachment to plain, evangelical truth, and a diminution of its sanctifying influence in their own hearts. Look at the history of the church in past ages, and see in how many lamentable instances the search for novelties in speculative theology, or the effort of a bold, active intellect to find out a philosophical solution for the difficulties which attend the doctrines of revelation, has chilled the benevolence and piety of Christians, and marred their whole character. Now why should we engage in pur-

suits so mistaken, and so perilous? Why should reason abandon its proper work, wander away from its province, and instead of following the true light from heaven, yield itself up to its own blind impulses?

The consequences of pursuing inquiries beyond the proper bounds, and of giving a disproportionate attention to matters of speculation, may be illustrated by a case in common life.—A sick man receives the best medical advice as to the treatment of his disease. But while making use of the medicine prescribed by the physician, he engages so eagerly in investigating its nature and properties, and indulges such a prying, restless curiosity to know philosophically *how* and *why* it produces the effect intended, that he experiences no kind of advantage from it. At length he learns, that if he would be successful in his efforts to recover his health, he must dismiss all his restless speculations, and with quietness of mind, and confidence in his physician, just take the medicine, and leave it, undisturbed, to produce its appropriate effect. So as to divine truth, which our heavenly Physician has appointed to be the means of remedying our spiritual diseases. If we would be benefited by it, we must receive it in its scriptural simplicity. We must be as little children, sensible of our ignorance, confiding implicitly in the wisdom of God, and cordially believing whatever he declares. Our subtle speculations often disturb the operation of divine truth, and diminish, if they do not prevent, its salutary effect on the heart.

Consider then, brethren, how great our mistake must be, if we depart from our proper province, and, instead of confining ourselves to the consideration of the simple doctrines and facts which God has revealed, go into those abstruse inquiries, which lead beyond the limits of human knowledge. If we do this in only a small degree, we shall certainly sustain an injury ourselves, and occasion injury to others. How then must it be, if we make such inquiries the chief object of our attention, never satisfied with the plain doctrines of the Bible, but forever pressing our minds into metaphysical subtilties? If we do this, our religion cannot be healthy and thriving. Long experience shows, that piety can no more grow upon dry speculations, than a hungry man can be nourished by analyzing food as a chemist, instead of eating it.

But the greatest mistake of all, is the practice of introducing philosophical discussions into the pulpit. Whatever may be our private inclination or taste, when we stand before public assemblies as ministers of Christ, we must preach *the word of God*, must exhibit the simple truths of the Bible. Casting into the shade the primary doctrines of revelation, and giving prominence to the deductions of speculative reason, has, in all past ages, been a great impediment to the prosperity of the church, and the progress of Christianity in the world. While listening to some men who are invested with the sacred office, I say within myself,—*they may, for aught I know, be metaphysicians and philoso-*

phers ; but I am sure they are not ministers of the gospel. The preaching of such men is almost any thing, rather than a clear exhibition of the doctrines of the cross. Even as to those evangelical truths, which they occasionally teach,—they seem to believe them, and to teach them, not so much because they find them in the Bible, as because they are able, or think they are able to deduce them from the principles of reason.

On this subject, I make my appeal to the actual experience of Christians. Through all their mental states, at the commencement and during the progress of their piety, that which makes salutary impressions, is plain scripture truth. It is this which awakens the sinner from his slumbers, and shows him his guilty, wretched state. It is this, which leads him to repent and believe ; and which excites his love, his submission, his obedience, and devotion. It is this, which supports him in affliction, and fills him with joy in the near views of death and eternity. The excellent Dr. Watts, after having indulged himself in a great variety of fruitless speculations on the subject of religion, penitently confessed his error, and prayed for divine forgiveness ; and when he came to lie on a bed of sickness, said, *that a few simple, easy truths of the gospel were all that he found to be of any value to him ;* and he resolved that, if his life was spared, *he would study the Bible more, and speculate less.*

Is it not generally the case, that in proportion as Christians believe and love the plain truths of God's

word, and have their hearts duly affected with them, they are disinclined to enter the field of abstruse investigation? Suppose we were zealously engaged in any of those metaphysical inquiries which have been interesting to men of speculative habits; and suppose in the midst of this employment, God should tell us for a certainty, that we had but a few days to live; how quickly should we dismiss our useless speculations, and fix our thoughts on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the doctrines of his gospel! And how quickly should we do this, if God should appear in his glory to build up Zion; if he should display the omnipotence of his Spirit in the conviction of sinners, and the inquiry of multitudes should come to us, "What shall we do to be saved?" If you wish to know what is the best employment of reason in matters of religion, inquire how Brainerd and Edwards and Whitfield used it, when, in the midst of a revival, they instructed and warned men day and night with tears. Nay, rather inquire how Paul and Peter used it, and most of all, how Jesus used it. In them, surely, reason was directed right, and accomplished the purposes for which it was given.

The subject before us, my Christian brethren, is peculiarly important at the present day. In the state of the churches, of the ministry, and of the community at large, there is a mixture of what is highly encouraging, with what is dangerous and alarming. Everlasting thanks be to God our Saviour for all the success

which has crowned the labors of his ministers, and for all the prosperity of the churches, in every part of this favored land. Thanks to his name, that he has maintained the cause of his people amid so much opposition from without, and so many imperfections and divisions within. We have numberless evidences of the divine favor, which we ought never to overlook. But on the other hand, it would be unwise for us to close our eyes upon existing evils. And it would be specially unsuitable for me, called as I am to address you on such a subject, to disguise the calamities which have in past ages been brought upon the church, or the dangers to which we are exposed at the present day, from *the mistaken use of reason*.

For any man to suppose that the sacred volume, which is given us by divine inspiration, does not contain an intelligible and perfect rule of faith, would be to dishonor God, the author of inspiration, and to forfeit the character of a protestant, and a Christian. If then a diversity of religious opinions exists among us, some of us are certainly in the wrong; and so far as this is the case, it must be that we have not applied our reason in a right manner to the study of the Bible; and that we fail of understanding it correctly through our own fault; or else it must be that passing beyond our limits, we attempt to explore dark and pathless regions, or plunge into unfathomable depths. So far as we study the Bible with a right state of mind, and in a right manner, and obtain a correct understanding of what it

contains ; so far we must be agreed. And if we are satisfied with what the Bible contains, we shall not be disposed to spend our time upon questions which it does not settle ; and of course such questions will occasion no variance or strife.

See now, what endless differences of opinion there are in our religious community ! And how obvious the tendencies are to new and still greater differences ! Is there nothing deserving blame in all this ? Is it a matter of unavoidable necessity, that those to whom God has given the faculty of reason, and a perfect rule to guide its operations, should be forever divided, and forever in a state of collision ? When HE who made us, commands us to be of *the same mind and judgment* ; is obedience wholly impracticable ? When Jesus prayed for the union of his people, did he consider their union an impossibility ? No, brethren ; our union in faith and in love is not an impossibility. It is an obvious and important duty. It is what our benevolent Saviour justly requires, and what the precious interests of his kingdom imperiously demand of us. If then we divide and contend, we act against the will of our blessed Lord ; against the spirit of his religion and the welfare of his church. And how much may we thus do to blast our fairest hopes of the enlargement and glory of Christ's kingdom !

Here an interesting inquiry arises in regard to our own obligations. What duty have we to perform in reference to the circumstances of the present day ? How

ominous, in some respects, these circumstances are ! Behold what indescribable restlessness of mind exists in relation to the doctrines of Christianity ! What thirst for novelty and change, shows itself in those who receive not the truth in the love of it, and in many instances, in those who are friends to Christ, and even in those who are called to preach his gospel !—a thirst for novelty and change, which bids fair to produce new theories and sects in religion, as frequently at least, and as abundantly, as the earth produces a harvest ! What an adventurous, head-long spirit frequently appears among the more intelligent and educated classes in Europe and in America, utterly regardless of consequences, and brooking no guidance or control even from the word of God ! Behold the mighty commotion in the elements of the intellectual and moral world ! In these circumstances, what duty is required of us ? Especially, what are we called to do in regard to the mutual prejudices and divisions, and, I must add, animosities too, which exist among Christians, and in too many instances even among ministers ? We may perhaps find, that we are not wholly without blame in this matter. Though we may have done nothing directly to occasion these evils, have we done all in our power to prevent or to remove them ? Have we scrupulously observed the directions of our benevolent Saviour, and copied his example ? And have we cherished the feelings which were so clearly exhibited in his actions and in his prayers ? He came down from heaven to redeem

us from destruction ; and just before he died on the cross, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said ;—*Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* There is nothing on earth, which is more an object of desire with our gracious Redeemer, than the cordial and entire union of his people. And there is nothing more offensive and grievous to him, than the want of love and union among them. And as there is at the present day so much division and disaffection among his followers, must they not expect he will visit them in righteous judgment ? And what if he should see fit to manifest his displeasure by withholding from them the kind, healing influences of his Spirit, and giving them up to still more violent and bitter contention ? Or what if he should chastise us, by leaving us exposed to the most pernicious errors, both old and new, yea, by suffering the grossest infidelity to take root in our cities, and to spread far and wide through the land, and, as a fearful token of divine wrath, to lay waste this our fair inheritance ?

Think not, brethren, that I am dealing in fictions. The apprehensions I have expressed are occasioned by facts,—facts which occur in every part of our country, as well as in other countries. The number is above computation, of those who cast off all respect for the holy Scriptures, and all sense of accountableness to God, and, as though there was no law and no intelligence superior to themselves, boldly claim the right to follow without check the guidance of their own reason, and their own inclination. And what multitudes are there, who profess a respect for the word of God, but who forget that they are of yesterday and know nothing, and who really show more confidence in themselves, than in the Prophets and Apostles, or even in the Lord from heaven! What multitudes, who forget that the understanding is darkened and disordered by sin, and that, in this state, it is no more fit to be our guide in respect to truth, than the corrupt heart is in respect to duty! In a word, so many and so powerful are the causes of error and apostacy now at work in the state of society, in the hearts of men, yea, in the hearts of Christians and ministers also, that unless a power and mercy higher than the heavens shall prevent, these American churches may become like the seven fallen churches of Asia, and we, who are now sending Missionaries to distant lands, may in process of time, depart so far from the simplicity of the gospel, and sink into such ignorance and error, that Missionaries of the cross must be sent from India, or from the Islands of the sea, to preach the gospel here. Say not that these

apprehensions arise from a dark, boding melancholy. They arise from a sober review of the history of human nature. The mind of man is so disordered, his heart is so treacherous and corrupt, that the evils I have mentioned may all be realities, as they often have been in ages that are past. And then, where will be our flourishing churches, and our civil and religious institutions? And what will be the heritage of our children?

Such are the evils which either exist among us, or threaten us. Now, brethren, is there any remedy? Is there any thing which can be done, and which ought to be done by us, to prevent or remove these tremendous evils? I have no time to go into this inquiry at large. I shall only hint at a single view of it, and that suggested by my particular subject.

As one means, then, of preventing or remedying these portentous evils, take care to *keep reason within its province, and to use it right*. Make the Bible the standard of your faith, and be content with it. Let all the powers of the mind bow to the authority of the word of God. If men refuse to do this, and rely upon their own reason as their ultimate standard; the standard of each may differ from the standard of others, and endless clashings of opinion may ensue. But if we make the word of God our standard; if, instead of taking upon us to teach the inspired writers, we suffer them to teach us; and while we attempt to conform our faith to their instructions, if we cherish the spirit which they inculcate; what can hinder us from agree-

ing in our religious opinions, or from loving one another? Let us, then, carefully avoid such a misapplication of reason in matters of religion, as will make us in any degree accessary to the prevalence of discord and strife among the friends of Christ. Humbly and devoutly let us study the sacred volume, and draw all our religious opinions from it. Let us be satisfied with just what God has taught us, making his word our guide, not only as to the doctrines we shall believe, but as to all the modifications of our faith, and the manner of exhibiting it, never attempting to go above it, or beyond it in any respect whatever. Never let us forget the weakness of our reason, and the exceeding littleness of our minds. Always come to the Bible with perfect confidence in the divine wisdom which dictated it, and resolved to add nothing to it, and take nothing from it. Go just as far as the inspired writers go, and stop where they stop. Think with them; believe with them; speak with them; feel with them. When at times your reason calls forth its powers, such as they are, to establish the truths of religion, and to obviate objections and difficulties, pause occasionally, and inquire, whether Christ and the Apostles explained these truths, and answered objections against them, as you do. If we conform exactly to the measure of the word of God, believing and teaching the doctrines and duties of religion just as they are there presented, we shall secure all that is valuable, and avoid whatever is hurtful or dubious. Respecting every part of the system of

evangelical truth, considered in a speculative light, a fertile imagination or intellect may raise questions, on which we are never likely to agree. Why? Because the questions lead beyond the sphere of our knowledge, and of course can never be settled by argument. If we push them into notice, especially if we give them a prominent place in our discussions, difference of opinion, and then controversy, will be likely to be the consequence. And controversy on such subjects will, in the end, disturb the peace of the churches. What then is our duty? What shall we do with questions of this kind? *Just let them alone.*

Brethren, I would not overrate the evil which I am endeavoring to expose. I would by no means make the wrong use of reason the only cause of division among Christians, or of injury to the churches. But a careful examination will show, that this has been and still is one of the most fruitful sources of dissention and bitterness, especially among the public teachers of religion. Here then is a case of conscience. There is a certain set of inquiries and speculations, to which I will suppose some of us are particularly attached, but which lead beyond the province of reason, i. e. beyond the simple doctrines of facts revealed in the Scriptures. If these speculations are pressed upon the public attention, they will in all probability occasion discord and strife. Shall we then indulge our fondness for them, and insist upon defending them, and press them continually upon the attention of the community? Perhaps we

may think them of some real importance. But are they as important, as the peace of the churches, the union of ministers, and the spread of the glorious gospel through the land, and through the world? We will then, at least, take up these things in their proper order; and, if we must attend to abstruse speculations, we will attend to them *after* we have done all that is more important. When we are urged by our feelings, or by circumstances, to employ our reason on the subjects referred to, we will inquire, whether there is no other duty which, in point of importance, stands in order before this. For how can we keep a good conscience, if we turn aside from those momentous duties which the God of heaven calls us to perform, to speculate and dispute about things of little or no value? Cast your eye over the history of the church in past ages, and see what a dreadful waste of influence, what a loss of holiness and comfort has been occasioned by the misapplication and abuse of reason among the followers of Christ. How often have they enlisted in trifling, unavailing controversies, and expended upon them time and talent and labor sufficient, with the blessing of God, to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth! It is a fact which is well known to those who are acquainted with the history of the church, but which I cannot mention without shame and mortification, that almost all the party-spirit, discord, and contention, which have ever prevailed in Christendom, have arisen from the ambition or misguided zeal of Christian

ministers, and from their attempting, in the strength of their own reason, *to be wise above what is written*. The Lord grant, that this mistake of ministers, so injurious to the interests of religion, may not be repeated. May those who preach the gospel of Christ, do nothing to hinder its success, and nothing to occasion triumph to its enemies. May those who labor and pray for the arrival of the millennium, never do that which will put it off to a greater distance. May they never waste their intellectual and moral powers to accomplish a work in which God will never help them, and neglect those labors of love, which he is ready to crown with his blessing.

The course which I have taken the liberty to recommend as so important at the present day, may require of us a more diligent and devoted study of the word of God, than we have been used to. It may require a more constant recurrence to it as the source and standard of our religious sentiments. It may require us to abandon some mental occupations to which we are fondly attached, and some speculative theories, which perhaps our reason has been proud of inventing or defending. And, my Christian brethren, may not this be the very labor and self-denial, which our Lord and Master requires of us, as one of the best means of promoting the spirit of love and union, of converting errorists and infidels, and advancing all the objects of pious benevolence? At the present day, it is our duty and our privilege to engage in a delightful and glorious

work,—the work of studying more diligently and understanding more perfectly the word of God ; the work of guiding the young, of instructing the ignorant, of saving the lost, and of extending at home and abroad the reign of our Redeemer. It is a great and blessed work, sufficient to occupy all our time, and all our intellectual and moral powers. We have enough surely for our reason to do, without making it the instrument of rash and fruitless speculation. Surely, we have sufficient subjects of investigation, without those which gender strife. And we have surely sufficient to contend with, without contending with one another.

And now, brethren and friends, let me say in conclusion, if any of you ever grow weary of the duty which God has assigned to you as rational and immortal beings ; if you ever grow impatient of the restraints of his holy word, and begin to employ your reason on any subject, which lies beyond your province, and which, however enticing it may be to your curiosity, is foreign to your great work ; you will hear from your blessed Lord that cutting rebuke, which he once gave to the inquisitiveness of an apostle ; *What is that to thee ? Follow thou me.*

DISCOURSE XI.

THE CERTAIN TRIUMPH OF THE REDEEMER.

For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.—1 Cor. xv. 25.

OF the probability of a future event, considered simply and by itself, we can know absolutely nothing. Thus, were it demanded whether or not at some point in the regions of infinite space, a system existed similar to our own, I certainly could not answer. To affirm and to deny, would both be alike unphilosophical. Upon the supposition which we have made, there is nothing upon which an opinion can be reasonably founded. If, however, any relations could be traced between the existence of such a system and some clearly established fact, the case would at once be altered. In proportion to the multiplicity and the strength of these relations, would our belief be strengthened, until it arrived at a degree of conviction very

little short of that produced by mathematical demonstration or by the evidence of the senses.

The same principles apply, if we are called upon to answer a question that may be asked respecting the immaterial world. Were it demanded whether the inhabitants of such a system were happy or miserable, I could not answer. To affirm or deny, would be equally premature; for no media of proof on either side have been as yet advanced. Could it, however, be shown under what circumstances the inhabitants in question had been created, and what relations subsisted between their happiness or misery and the laws which God had established for the government of his creatures, then, as in the other case, might an opinion be reasonably entertained.

You observe, then, that in considering the probability of a future event, considered simply and by itself, there is no room for argument; for, from the nature of the case, there is no evidence on which conviction can be founded. Argument is employed in examining the relations which exist between one event that is known and another that is unknown or doubtful. These relations we have the ability to trace with greater or with less accuracy. Here is the true field for human investigation. It is thus that the probability of a future event is brought within the grasp of scientific investigation. Mere assertion here will avail nothing. If one man affirm, he must show why; and if another deny, he must prove not only that the previous showing

is inconclusive, but also that a contrary showing can be maintained. He who shall do otherwise, waives his claim to the character of a philosopher.

The text asserts the certainty of a future event. It becomes a reasonable man to judge of its probability, upon the same principles as he would judge of the probability of any other future event.

It is said that Jesus Christ must reign, until he have put all enemies under his feet. The language is metaphorical, and the metaphor is derived from the language of monarchical governments. A prince reigns wherever his laws are obeyed. By Christ's universal reign, then, it must be meant that his laws will be universally obeyed. These laws are contained in the New Testament, a book which purports to be a revelation from God to man. Hence, Jesus Christ will have triumphed universally, or will have put all enemies under his feet, when the supreme authority of the Bible over the conscience of man shall be universally acknowledged, and when its precepts shall be obeyed by people of every nation and of every language.

Besides this, there are various benefits resulting from this obedience to the Gospel which are alike predicted. These are briefly comprised in the promise, that the miseries of the fall shall be abolished, and this earth become the abode of happiness and peace.

Now, considering the event simply and by itself, no one could decide, either for or against its probability. Our only mode of ascertaining any thing certain in

regard to it, is to consider the relations which it sustains to things which exist, or to the laws which God has established for the government of the universe. Thus, we may inquire whether the moral system contained in the Gospel have any such relations to the sensitive part of our nature as will warrant us to expect its universal reception. We may examine whether the Being, who, by the acknowledgment of all, governs the universe, have given any intimations on this subject. Or we may observe whether the moral forces, which direct the movement of society, have not been so combined, that such an event must be the necessary result. Now all these, and various others that might be adduced, are as fair topics of argument as any other. If, on such grounds as these, we argue the question fairly, it will not be sufficient to answer us by a smile, or an epithet, or a sarcasm. There is argument neither in drollery nor abuse. If a man deny the probability of what we attempt to prove, he must show that the relations which we have attempted to illustrate do not exist, and, also, that other relations do exist which would establish the probability of the contrary event.

So much for the nature of the argument. We now come to the argument itself. We shall endeavour to show, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will universally prevail.

I. From its peculiar adaptedness to gratify the wants of the sensitive part of our nature.

II. From the intimations, in the history of the world, which the Creator of the universe has given, that such is his determination.—And

III. From the fact, that the elements of society have been so combined that, at some time or other, such must be the necessary result.

I. It is probable that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will universally prevail, from its peculiar adaptedness to gratify the wants of the sensitive part of our nature.

By the sensitive part of our nature, I mean those attributes of mind, which are affected either pleasantly or painfully, by facts, and by things about us, that do not address themselves exclusively to the organs of sense. It is, therefore, in this discussion, taken for granted, that we possess taste, which is gratified by our progress in the knowledge of the qualities and relations of things, which delights in the beautiful and glories in the vast; and, also, a conscience which is susceptible of affections peculiar to itself upon the doing of right or the commission of wrong; and that these affections, so far as his history has been traced, have more to do than any other with the happiness or misery of man. Taking these facts for granted, it is not difficult to foretell what sort of intellectual and moral exhibitions will be most widely disseminated, transforming the human character and directing the human will. It is upon the supposition that we may thus judge what will in a particular manner affect the human mind, that

the whole science both of criticism and rhetoric is founded.

I have said that taste is gratified by progress in knowledge of the qualities and relations of things, or by striking exhibitions of what is commonly called relative beauty. Hence the pleasure with which we contemplate a theorem of widely extended application in the sciences, or an invention of important utility in the arts. Now, it is found that the material universe has been so created as admirably to harmonize with this principle of our nature. The laws of matter are few and comparatively simple, but their relations are multiplied even to infinity. The law of gravitation may be easily explained to an ordinary man, or even to an intelligent child. But who can trace one half of its relations to things solid and fluid, things animate and inanimate, the very form of society itself, to this system, other systems, in fine, to the mighty masses of this material universe? The mind delights to carry out such a principle to its ramified illustrations, and hence it cherishes, as its peculiar treasure, a knowledge of these principles themselves. Thus was it, that the discovery of such a law gave the name of Newton to immortality, reduced to harmony the once apparently discordant movements of our planetary system, taught us to predict the events of coming ages, and to explain what was before hidden from the creation of the world.

Now, he who will take the trouble to examine will perceive in the Gospel of Jesus Christ a system of

ultimate truths in morals, in a very striking manner analogous to these elementary laws of physics. In themselves, they are few, simple, and easily to be understood. Their relations, however, as in the other case, are infinite. The moral principle, by which you can easily teach your little child to regulate her conduct in the nursery, will furnish matter for the contemplation of statesmen and sages. It is the only principle on which the decisions of cabinets and courts can be founded, and is, of itself, sufficient to guide the diplomatist through all the mazes of the most intricate negotiation. Let any one who pleases make the experiment for himself. Let him take one of the rules of human conduct which the Gospel prescribes, and, having obtained a clear conception of it, just as it is revealed, let him carry it out in its unshrinking application to the doings and dealings of men. At first, if he be not accustomed to generalizations of this sort, he will find much that will stagger him, and he perhaps will be ready hastily to decide that the ethics of the bible were never intended for practice. But, let him look a little longer, and meditate a little more intensely, and expand his views a little more widely, or become, either by experience or by years, a little older, and he will more and more wonder at the profoundness of wisdom and the universality of application of the principles of the Gospel. With the most expanded views of society, he can go nowhere where the bible has not been before him. With the most penetrating sagacity, he can make no

discovery which the bible had not long ago promulgated. He will find neither application which inspiration did not foresee, nor exception against which it has not guarded. He will, at last, sink down in humble adoration of the wisdom of Jesus of Nazareth, convinced that he is the wisest man as well as the profoundest philosopher who yields himself up, in meekness and simplicity of spirit, to the teachings of the Saviour.

Now, with these universal moral principles the bible is filled. At one time, you find them explicitly stated ; at another, merely alluded to ; here, standing out in a precept ; there, retiring behind a reflection ; now, enwrapped in the drapery of a parable, then giving tinge and coloring to a graphically drawn character. Its lessons of wisdom are thus adapted to readers of every age, and to every variety of intellectual culture. Hence no book is adapted to be so universally read as the bible. No other precepts are of so extensive application, or are capable of guiding under so difficult circumstances. None other imbue the mind with a spirit of so deep forethought and so expansive generalization. Hence, there is no book which expands the intellect like the bible. It is the only book which offers a reasonable solution of the moral phenomena which are transpiring around us. Hence, there is the same sort of reason to believe that the precepts of the bible will be read, and studied, and obeyed, as there is to believe that the system of Newton will finally prevail, and eventually

banish from the languages of man the astronomical dreams of Vishnu or of Gandama.

There are, however, other exhibitions of taste, which present no less interesting illustrations of the adaptedness of the bible to the nature of man. It is in the exercise of this faculty, that he delights in the beautiful, glories in the vast, and becomes susceptible of the tenderness of the pathetic. I need not mention that these are among the most pleasing of our intellectual operations, nor that we eagerly search, in every direction, for the objects of their appropriate gratification.

To illustrate the sublimity and beauty of the Holy Scriptures, would, however, demand limits far more extensive than the present discussion will allow. I will, therefore, merely direct your attention to two considerations, which I select, not as the most striking, but as somewhat the most susceptible of brevity of illustration. The first is, the scriptural conceptions of character; the second, the scriptural views of futurity.

It is to be remembered, that the bible contains by far the oldest memorials of our race. Much of it was written by men who had scarcely emerged from the pastoral state, and who had acquired but little of the knowledge, even then possessed, either in the arts or the sciences. There was nothing in the circumstances in which they were placed, to give elevation to character, or beauty, or sublimity, to their conceptions of it. And yet, these conceptions are most strikingly diverse from every thing which we elsewhere behold in all the records

of antiquity. The heroes of the pagan classics are, for the most part, either sycophants or ruffians, as they are swayed, alternately, by cunning or by passion. The objects of their enterprizes are trifling and insignificant. Their narrative is valuable, neither for moral instruction, nor yet for elevated views of human nature, in the individual or in society, but for bursts of eloquent feeling and delineations of nature; everywhere the same, and always speaking the same language into the ear of Genius. The world, in its moral progress, has long since left behind it the ancient conceptions of distinguished character. Who would now take for his model Achilles, or Hector, or Ulysses, or Agamemnon? What mother would now relate their deeds to her children? How different a view is presented by the holy company of Patriarchs; Abraham, that beauteous model of an eastern prince; Moses, that wise legislator; David, the warrior poet; Daniel, the far sighted premier; and Nehemiah, the inflexible patriot. The world still looks up with reverence to these moral examples; they are still as profitable models for contemplation, as they were at the beginning.

But if we would consider this subject in its strongest light, bring together scriptural and classical characters of the same age. Contrast the history of Eneas by Virgil, the most gifted and the most humane of the Roman poets, with that of St. Paul, as found in the Acts and the Epistles. Contrast the faithless, vindictive,

gross, cowardly, and superstitious freebooter, with the upright, meek, benevolent, sympathizing, and yet fearless, and indomitable apostle. Or, if the thought be not profane, compare the most splendid conceptions either of ancient or modern times, with the character of Jesus of Nazareth, as it is delineated in the Gospels. We say, then, that if we would gratify our taste with true conceptions of elevated character, if we would satisfy that innate longing within us after something better and more exalted than our eyes rest upon on earth, it is to the bible that we shall be, by the principles of our nature, irresistibly attracted.

I spoke of the views which the gospel gives of futurity. A brief allusion to a very few topics must suffice for this part of the subject.

The Gospel alone has brought immortality to light. In the place of annihilation, or the transmigration of souls, or the dim place of shadows and of ghosts, or a paradise of sensual gratification, it reveals to us an eternity of moral pleasure or of moral pain, the eternal weight of glory or the wrath of God without mixture. Every thing else makes this world substance, and the other world shadow. The bible alone makes this world shadow, and the other world substance. While it makes this world merely the vestibule of our being, it alone renders it truly valuable, by making every moment and every purpose take strong hold of eternity.

The bible presents us with the only views of the character of Deity, in unison with the intellectual and moral aspirations of man. It tells us of a Being who, the essential cause of all things, sustains the flight of a sparrow, and upholds, by his word, this measureless universe; who, unsearchable in wisdom, allows every creature whom he has made to fulfil the purposes of its individual will, while, at the same time, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; who, infinite in compassion, is every where most intimately present to every one of us, sustaining the disconsolate, comforting the cast down, binding up the broken in heart, and pouring himself abroad, in blessing, upon the infinite creation which he everywhere pervades; a God, so pure that the heavens are not clean in his sight, and so just, that He will forever and everywhere mete out to every creature, how high or how low so ever, exactly according to the merit of its deeds.

But specially worthy to be mentioned here, is the transcendent conception of the plan of redemption. The race of man fixed in opposition to the unchangeable attributes of the all glorious God; the Son of God, undertaking the work of reconciliation; the mission of Christ, his bitter death, his triumphant resurrection and ascension to his primitive glory; entire cleansing from the stain of guilt to all that will believe; heaven, with its eternal weight of glory, freely offered to the penitent; the resurrection of the dead; the final judgment;

all things material fleeing away from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne ; the irrevocable decision ; the shouts of the redeemed ; the wailings of the lost ; these are some of the spiritual ideas which the Gospel has poured upon the darksome mind of sin-beclouded man. Now, setting aside altogether the fact, that, thus far, wherever these notions of religion have been taught, all others have soon ceased to be either known or thought of, I ask whether a system which sheds such light upon all the relations of man, which so fills his conceptions with all that is beautiful and sublime in morals, which proffers to him an immortality more glorious than aught that elsewhere the mind of man had conceived, must not, from the principles of human nature, be in the end universally received.

We proceed to consider another fact to which we, in the commencement, alluded. It is that, from some cause or other, there has prevailed throughout our race a very universal feeling of guiltiness, and an apprehension, more or less distressing, of the wrath of Deity, on account of sin.

Of the prevalence of this sentiment, you have manifest proof, in the terror with which unusual phenomena always inspire mankind, in the prevalence of sacrifices and other means of appeasing the wrath of the gods, in the forms of religion, almost as numerous as the tribes of men on the earth, and in the fact that in every nation particular individuals have been set apart, whose special business it has been to propitiate the Supreme

Being. Nor is this consciousness of guilt the mere phantom of a savage's imagination. I doubt whether there be a human being in this assembly, this evening, who hath not, more than once, so felt it as to exclaim, in all the bitterness of a wounded spirit, what must I do to be saved?

Of the distress which this apprehension has occasioned, you may judge from the nature of the means which have been adopted to alleviate it. Hence, arose those costly temples on which the wealth of nations was exhausted. Hence, smoked the hecatombs of classic story, and the countless victims of the Jewish service. Hence, the mother has devoted her first born to atone for her transgression, and the father has perished beneath the wheel of an idol's car. And hence, that every where, but in Protestant Christendom, the priesthood have exercised so entire a sway over the opinions and actions of men. Claiming the exclusive prerogative of propitiating the Deity, they wielded at will the stormy passions of the multitude. Such has been the fact under every form of false religion. It shows us, at least, how agonizing is this apprehension, and that men will sacrifice any thing, if it can only be allayed.

But neither the offerings of the laity, nor the services of the priesthood, could ever take away sin. The thoughtful heathen, as he retired from the classic temple and bleeding victim, out of a conscience still pressed down under the weight of its own condemnations, ex-

claimed, O that I knew where I might find Him ! The Hebrew, turning from the smoking altar and the atoning priest, still cried out, Wherewith shall I appear before God and bow myself before the High God ! The Hindu mother, returning childless from the river that has swallowed up her babe, feels the sting of guilt still rankling in unmitigated agony ! The body of the devotee is crushed beneath the wheel, but ah ! the wound was far deeper. From that mangled, bleeding corse, his soul is now set free, but yet uncleansed and in all her guiltiness, she appears before her God. Thus is it in our own country and at the present day. A man, feeling the agony of a guilty conscience, may flee every where but to Calvary, and there is no relief for his anguish. But let him hear that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life ; let him cast himself for salvation upon him whose blood cleanseth from all sin ; let him imbibe and practice the precepts of the Gospel, and he feels in his spirit that his deadly wound is healed. The peace that passeth understanding is shed abroad in his soul. The Spirit witnesseth with his spirit that he is reconciled to God. From the dominion of sin, from the tyranny of the passions, from subjection to a sensual and transitory world, from the intolerable anguish of a wounded spirit, the Son has made him free, and he is free indeed. Being justified by faith, he has

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoices with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

I am not speaking fables. I am speaking facts—facts as well attested as any other in the history of man. Such are the wants of our nature and such are the effects of the Gospel, wherever it is received in simplicity and in truth. And now, before we go any farther, let us reflect upon the ground we have gone over ; let us remark how the bible is adapted to gratify the taste, to ennoble the imagination, to expand the conception of man ; let us estimate the power of the religious principle in man, and the utter vanity and heartlessness of every thing else on which that principle can fasten, and I ask every man to say, for himself, whether, judging from its adaptedness to gratify the wants of our nature, it be not certain that it must in the end prevail.

So much for the first argument.

II. There is sound reason for believing that the Creator has given us assurance that the religion of the bible shall universally prevail.

I need scarcely repeat what was said at the commencement of this discourse, that, without an examination of the evidence in the case, to decide whether such an event would take place, or whether God would reveal it, would be absurdly unphilosophical. Yet some sort of notion of the probability of an event may be deduced from a comparison of the act with the known character of the actor. Thus, it is not improbable that

the Supreme Being should have a design with regard to this world, nor, as it is granted on all sides that he is infinitely merciful, is it improbable that he should design to remove the miseries which afflict us. Now, as the very thing said to be predicted, is that these miseries are to be removed, there is surely neither intrinsic probability in the thing itself, nor in the supposition that God should predict it.

But we assert that God has given positive assurance that the Gospel shall prevail. To present the argument at length would be unsuitable for this occasion. We shall merely attempt a very brief illustration of the principle on which the argument for the divine inspiration of the Scriptures rests.

You are aware, then, that the various events that come within our knowledge, take place in the manner of a regular and established series. Every one in this endless succession has its own antecedent and its own consequent. Hence are we enabled to use our reason, both in preparing for the future and in accounting for the past.

Whenever, in any case, this stated connection is discovered, so that one event is the invariable antecedent of the other, we call the first a cause, the second an effect. Thus, the falling of a shower is one event—the growth of vegetation is another. The connection between them has, in certain circumstances, been found invariable, and hence we say in summer that the rain has caused the grass to spring forth, and also that the

springing forth of the grass is the effect of the shower. The same is true of intellectual changes. Thus, reflection is one state of mind—knowledge is another. The connection between them has been found invariable, and hence we say that reflection is the cause of knowledge, and that knowledge is the effect of reflection.

When, however, we use these terms, we do not mean that the one event is the efficient cause of the other—that is, that it is the cause in such a sense that the one could produce the other, if there were nothing else existing in the universe. We merely mean that, in the present system, the one is made the stated antecedent of the other, but we know not that it has any more efficient agency in its production than any other thing. God is the sole and only efficient cause. If he had seen fit, he could as well have arranged entirely different antecedents and consequents, or he could have operated every change by itself, without having established any regular order of succession. But he has not seen fit thus to operate. He has connected every thing in the manner that we have shown. This we call the course of nature. It is God working according to the laws which he has been pleased to establish. And as He has established this manner of succession, He only can vary it. If, therefore, it be clearly and palpably varied *from*, it is equally clear and palpable that he himself must have varied it.

You will observe also, that these laws of antecedence and consequence, or of cause and effect, pervade equal-

ly the whole system, material and immaterial, of which we form a part. Thus, belief is a state of mind which never arises of itself, any more than the herb grows where there is no moisture. It has its regular and stated antecedents. Otherwise, there could be no reliance upon testimony, and all history and all reasoning about facts would be the veriest nonsense. I cannot *believe* that I see an audience before me, unless the antecedent be that I *see* an audience. I cannot *see* an audience, unless the antecedent be that an audience is present. Casualty in these intellectual changes would produce effects far more deleterious to the interests of society, than any that could arise from the same cause in the material world. It would at once do away, universally, belief and every thing that is predicated upon it.

Let us now apply these principles to the case before us. It is, I suppose, granted that a variation, clear and indisputable, from the established succession of cause and effect, or of antecedent and consequent, is a sufficient proof of the interposition of Deity; for none but He could have thus varied the mode of his own operation. Nor can it be denied that, if such a variation from the acknowledged laws of cause and effect be indissolubly connected with instructions purporting to come from God, God does in fact render himself responsible for the truths of all that is thus delivered.

Now, we say that the first promulgation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was attended with such a variation

from the laws of cause and effect, that the interposition of Deity must necessarily be supposed, in order to account for it, and, therefore, for the truth of whatever that Gospel reveals, the moral character of the Deity is responsible.

The apostles and disciples and the men of that day did most certainly believe, that they saw the eyes of the blind opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lepers cleansed, and the dead raised, by the word of Jesus of Nazareth ; and also, that, after having seen him crucified, dead, and buried, they saw him alive again, conversed with him, walked with him ; and that they afterwards saw him, under most remarkable circumstances, ascend up into heaven.

Now, I say, the question here really is not whether there *was* any variation from the regular succession of cause and effect, but where was that variation. Either these events took place at the word of Jesus Christ, or they did not. If they *did* take place, as the evangelists relate them, the variation consists in this, that God in this case suspended the laws of cause and effect, and made a single word to become the antecedent of changes totally unlike to any which, either before or since, have ever been known. And if this be so, then He has intended to render himself responsible for all that has been taught in connection with such an interposition. If, on the contrary, these events did not take place, at the word of Jesus Christ, then every individual of a great number of men either believed they

saw what they did not see, or they saw what did not exist. There must have been, therefore, a variation from the laws of cause and effect, in the case of every several individual who supposed himself a spectator ; that is, instead of a variation in one case, a variation in a thousand cases. Now such a departure from the laws of cause and effect could have been produced only by the Supreme Being, and it was inseparably connected with the promulgation of the Gospel. Just as much then, as in the other case, does it render the Supreme Being responsible for all that we find there either as precept or prophecy. On either supposition, the proof is full and decisive.

Such, then, is one view of the principles on which rests our belief that the agency of Deity was concerned in the promulgation of this system, and, therefore, that his veracity is responsible for the truth of it. The applications of the principle are various. In the Old Testament, the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish church, the separation of the Jews from all other nations, the facts connected with the prophecies which the sacred books contain, are inexplicable, upon any other supposition. Beside these, the fact that a few fishermen of Galilee should have discovered a new moral system, thousands of years in advance of their age, a system which does beyond question embody the moral laws by which the universe is governed, can be in no other manner explained. Grant that God spake, and all is revealed. Deny it, and all is mystery. Grant

that God spake, and there is one miracle; deny it, and there are ten thousand.

Now, in the examination of evidence, there is no religion whatever. It is a mere matter of science, and to be decided by the laws of science. In answer to what we have said, therefore, it will not do to laugh at religion, nor rail at enthusiasm. If a man disbelieve what we have here attempted to prove, let him show a reason for it. Let him either show a fallacy in our reasonings, or else allow our conclusion. If he will do neither, let him confess that he does not believe, though he cannot tell why he does not, and thus he waives the jurisdiction of reason, and puts himself on a level with the enthusiasts whom he so much derides.

So much, then, for the evidence that the author of the material system around us, the supreme and ever blessed God, is the author of the system of religion contained in the Holy Scriptures. There is just the same evidence to believe that it will universally prevail. Its prevalence is foretold in every variety of form; it is interwoven with the principles of the system itself.

The first promise after man's apostacy, "it shall bruise thy head," foretold enigmatically all the glory that we look for. In later ages it was revealed without a figure. As I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, was the promise of Jehovah to Moses. Prophet after prophet, rapt in holy vision, foresaw the coming triumphs of the Redeemer and rejoiced in the approaching subjection to his universal reign.

“ Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thy inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall no more lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more.” The same thing is taught by our Saviour in precept and in parable, and is abundantly to be inferred from the prayer which he hath taught us. In all the writings of the apostles, it is so frequently alluded to, that to mention all the passages in which it is either asserted or understood would occupy all the time which remains for the remainder of this discourse.

But why need I mention particular passages. The very system itself presupposes its universal extension. If God have interfered at all in the promulgation of the Gospel, it is all true. A taint of guiltiness hath overspread our whole race. This world is in rebellion against the everliving God. Jesus Christ has appeared in our nature, by a manifestation of infinite love, to win back our affection, and, by the offering up of Himself, to render consistent with holiness our reconciliation to God. He came to reclaim a lost world from its wanderings; to subdue to obedience this revolted province of Jehovah's empire; and to give indubitable assurance that all this would yet be triumphantly accomplished. He, whom, on the holy mount, the Father, from the excellent glory, declared to be his well beloved Son,

expired on the cross. And truly, as there is a God in heaven, this people shall yet be redeemed. This earth, which has been moistened with a Saviour's blood, shall yet be his universal possession ; for it bears upon its solid surface the seal to the irrevocable covenant. The misery of sin, which Jesus Christ came to do away, shall cease ; and from every nation and people under the whole heaven shall ascend the universal shout, Salvation to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb forever !

III. Thirdly. The elements of society have been so combined as manifestly to tend to such a result as revelation has predicted.

The nature of the proof in this case is as follows. It is taken for granted, that men are endowed with various desires essential to their existence in its present state. Many of these desires can only be gratified in a state of society, and when other men, as well as the individual, obey the laws which the Creator has established. Now, it can be shown, conclusively, that these laws are essentially the same as those revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, when every man finds it for his own interest that himself and all other men should universally obey the precepts of the Gospel, it is evident that the love of happiness essential to our sensitive nature, must in the end ensure its universal reception.

I will endeavour to illustrate the principle on which this argument rests, by an allusion to the laws which regulate the accumulation of national wealth.

The various substances of which this earth is composed are all designed for the benefit of man. Every one possesses some quality by which it is capable of gratifying some human desire. But that quality must first be discovered, and the substance in which it resides must be modified by the hand of industry, before it can answer the purpose for which it was designed. As soon as it has been thus modified, it becomes an article of wealth. And nations and individuals are denominated rich, just in proportion to the number and magnitude of the articles which they possess, adapted to gratify the desires of man.

We say that, in order to the production of wealth, the substances of nature must be modified by the hand of industry. Here you will remark two things. 1. The qualities of the substance must be discovered. 2. The means must be discovered for giving it the desired modification. He has in himself no power to modify matter, except to the very small amount of his muscular strength. By his intellectual ability, however, he can discover and put in operation agents that will produce the effects which he desires. To illustrate what I mean, in the manufacture of sugar. The sweetness, which resides in the cane, must first be discovered, or the vegetable, though of itself intrinsically valuable, would be useless. This is a work of mind. Again, man has no organs by which he can transform the juice into sugar, and unless it be transformed, his former discovery is useless. He is endowed with facul-

ties, by which he can discover certain qualities of fire and iron, which will enable industry to produce the required result. This again we see is a work of mind. The principle here illustrated is universal. It applies to the production of wealth, or objects for the gratification of desire every where. And hence results the universal law that, just in proportion as the human mind is most successfully stimulated to discovery and invention and the body inured to vigorous labor, will the wealth of a nation increase, and it is not possible that it should be increased in any other manner.

Now, it has been found, by the experience of ages, that the strongest stimulant which can possibly be applied to the productive energies both of body and of mind, is to allow every man to employ his whole power, physical and intellectual, in such manner as he chooses, if he do not so employ it as to interfere with the corresponding enjoyment of his neighbour. In other words, it has been found that nations grow rich and happy, just in proportion as every man, magistrate, and citizen, estimates every other man's happiness as dearly as his own; that is to say, when every man obeys the universal law of human action contained in the Scripture, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is the reason why justice clothes a nation in plenty, while injustice curses it with want. This is the reason why so many nations on the earth, with meagre and stinted physical advantages, abound in the comforts and even the luxuries of life, while regions of

exhaustless fertility, under a Mahometan or Papal despotism, live from century to century on the brink of starvation. Thus is it that the Christian religion has frequently, in a few years, done more to promote the progress of civilization, than all other means united have ever done, in many generations.

But this is not all. That a nation may grow rich, not only is it necessary that industry be exerted; beside this, the instruments, with which it may work and the material on which it is to be employed, in other words, capital, must be accumulated. If whatever is produced be immediately consumed on the gratification of the passions, not only are the means of future accumulation annihilated, but the power of the agent for labor is lessened, and hence must result an accelerated tendency to poverty. Capital can be accumulated only by self-denial, by the government of the passions, by investing all that portion of the results of industry, which is not needed for our temperate enjoyment, in some such manner as shall benefit the condition of our fellow-men. Now, this is just the discipline for which the Gospel prepares mankind. Its first lesson is self-denial. Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple. At the very outset, then, it prescribes entire subjugation of the passions, the very basis of all frugality. Another of its lessons is the necessity of individual and universal industry. "This we commanded you, that if any man would not work neither shall he eat." Thus, while inculcating, as religious duties, in-

dustry and frugality, the Gospel teaches the soundest and most valuable lessons in the science of political economy. That nations, as well as individuals, can grow rich on no other principles, is as evident as demonstration. And, on the other hand, that a nation, practicing the industry and frugality of the Gospel, must become wealthy, that is, must abound in all that is requisite to satisfy virtuous desire, is equally incontestible. Thus we see how closely is connected the prevalence of religion with the prosperity of an individual nation.

Besides, where every individual is accumulating, the whole must accumulate, and, hence, such a nation must have an annual amount of wealth to offer in the markets of the world. But where shall she offer it. An indolent and profligate people, with imperfect skill and scanty capital, will have nothing to offer in return. It is not that they do not want the results of your labor and frugality, but that they have nothing wherewith to purchase them. A degraded and vicious people can never be valuable customers; for they must always be very limited consumers. To be aware of the force of these considerations, compare our exports to a heathen, with those to a Christian nation; or those to a Protestant, with those to a Catholic nation; or those to the island of Great Britain, with those to the rich and thickly peopled shores of the Mediterranean.

Thus you see that not only is it for the interest of every man that his fellow-citizens should obey the precepts of the Gospel, it is also for the interest of every

nation that every other nation should embrace it. So thoroughly is universal philanthropy interwoven with the social system of this world. Thus necessary has God made the happiness of my fellow-men to my own well being. An indolent, ignorant, and badly governed nation is a pecuniary injury, as well as a disgrace, to every other nation on earth, and the soundest principles of political wisdom would teach us all to make an effort to reclaim it. Our own interest, and the interest of man every where, are, by the ordinance of the Creator, the same. Benevolence is always the greatest sagacity. Hence, if we would render a nation a profitable customer, the surest means for accomplishing our object is to furnish it with the bible, the only certain means of intellectual and moral improvement.

To illustrate the truth of these remarks, allow me to refer you for a moment to the history of the African slave trade. The whole slave coast and a wide extent of interior is fertile in all the productions of a tropical climate. Few portions of the earth would yield more abundantly, if submitted to the hand of industry, rendered skillful by education. And yet, what does that vast region export? a few cargoes of gums and ivory, and some thousands of human bodies. It is almost a wilderness, and is becoming every year more desolate. What does it consume? a few cargoes of trinkets and coarse cutlery, scarcely as much as one respectable manufacturing village would easily furnish. I ask you, now, what would have been the result if, instead of

murder and pillage, we had sent them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the civilization which always follows in its train. Why, that whole region would have been now as thickly peopled as these United States. That coast would have been studded with cities, those rivers would have been lined with villages; the whole territory would have been, at this moment, blooming like the garden of Eden, loaded with the abundance of harvest, and filled with the abodes of civilized man. There is not a workshop, in Europe or America, whose fabrics she would not have purchased, nor a man in Christendom who would not have been, at this very day, the happier for her productions. You see, then, from this individual case, how intimately connected are our interest and our duty. You see how our own happiness is interwoven with that of every brother of the family of man. You see that the best desires of the human heart must, in the end, lead us to choose for ourselves, and to offer to others, the moral laws of the New Testament; for, in no other manner, can those desires be so fully gratified.

Another illustration may be taken from a reference to the awful miseries which war has, from the earliest ages, inflicted upon the human race. This calamity is, as you know, the immediate result of the gratification of human passion and human avarice. It can never cease, until men are universally restrained by moral principle. Estimate, if you can, the amount of national distress which it has brought upon Europe, for

the last hundred years. And, here, you must remember that all the sums taken to support armies and navies, and all the property wasted, and all the interest upon the debt thus accumulated, is so much capital taken from the shop of the mechanic, or the warehouse of the merchant, or the granary of the husbandman, which would otherwise have gone on increasing forever at the rate of compound interest. The wealth consumed in wars on the continent, for the last hundred years, if it had been suffered thus to accumulate in peace, would have made every acre of Europe a garden, and every individual comparatively rich. And, had the principles of the Gospel universally prevailed, it would have thus accumulated. Look at the lesson which Great Britain teaches. Every political change wrings from her starving population a universal groan of distress, at this time almost intolerable. But, now, take the principle and interest of her national debt, for both of them are taken from the capital of the people, and estimate what would be its amount at compound interest. It has been spent in war and bloodshed. Had it been accumulated by the arts of peace, to the present moment, it would be abundantly sufficient to confer education and refinement, and literal abundance, upon the poorest subject of the realm.

Now all this, in the progress of society, will become evident to every man. It will be universally and clearly seen, that men can neither attain the happiness of which the present state is susceptible, nor even escape

the miseries which now press so heavily upon them, but by obeying the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, we say that the elements of society are so combined as to tend to such a result as revelation has predicted.

Let us now recapitulate the argument which we have pursued.

1. We have endeavored to show, that there is the same reason to believe that the bible will be universally read, as there is to believe that any other book will be read, which elevates the conceptions and gratifies the taste. There is the same reason to believe that it will be obeyed, as there is to believe that any other precepts will be obeyed, that afford permanent relief to a universal and most distressing anguish.

2. There is reason to believe, that the attributes of the Supreme Creator are responsible for its success. He has seen fit to connect, indissolubly, the proof of it with the principles on which all evidence of every sort rests. Either he is not the author of the ordinary events which take place around us, or he is also the author of the extraordinary events which were unquestionably connected with the promulgation of the Gospel. He is as much responsible, in one case as in the other, for the belief which right reason teaches us.

3. The desire for improvement, in his condition, which animates every man, can be gratified only by obeying the social laws which his Creator has established. These laws are the precepts of the New

Testament. As the progress of knowledge reveals more and more clearly the indissoluble connection between the moral and physical laws of nature, our very desire of happiness will teach men, as nations and individuals, the wisdom of taking, as the rules of our conduct, the precepts of the Saviour. Now, what men clearly perceive to be their interest, it is reasonable to suppose that they will do.

Again. The connection which this subject holds with the evidences of the truth of the bible are various and important. Each of the topics which we have discussed furnishes a separate and distinct medium of proof.

1. It is not beyond the power of human reason to affirm, in general, what the human mind can and what it cannot accomplish. There is no instance on record, that I remember, in which any human being has been many centuries in advance of his age. On the contrary, it has been evident that, by the general progress of society, the most remarkable discoveries must soon have been made by others, if they had not been made by the individuals whom they now distinguish. Nay, so remarkably is this the fact, that many of the most extraordinary discoveries have been made by several persons, in different countries, at the same time. But here is a case in which a few men, in general illiterate, and by nothing else but moral character distinguished from the lower class of the nation, to which they belonged, have promulgated a system of moral truth not

only in advance of their age, but the profoundest wisdom of the present day cannot tell how much it is in advance of our own. The most accurate survey of human relations has not yet demonstrated the truth of a single moral law which is not found within those pages. The infinitely diversified relations of society have not yet given rise to a single moral question which is not there solved. Age after age attempts in vain to discover a radical cure for some form of social misery, and, when the cure is at last discovered, it is found to be the very same as Jesus Christ and his apostles, nearly two thousand years ago, taught. Now, I say that there is nothing parallel to this in the whole history of the human mind. It as far transcends any thing that has been elsewhere seen, of the ordinary, or extraordinary exhibitions of intellectual power, as carrying away the gates of Gaza, or overthrowing the pillars of a mighty temple, transcends the ordinary exhibitions of muscular strength. Thus, exclusively of all proof from miracles, I see not how the acknowledged facts can be accounted for, without the admission of divine interposition. And, if God have interposed at all in the case, the whole system is true.

2. We are all aware that all our knowledge, of external objects as well as of past events, comes through the medium of evidence. By the evidence of my senses, I know that there is a tree before me. By the evidence of testimony, I know that Rome was built. Overturn the principles of evidence, and there is, at once, an end

to all science and to all history. No man could know any thing farther than that he existed, and that he thought. Now, it has pleased God so to interweave the proof of his miraculous interposition, in the promulgation of religion, with the very principles of evidence, that he who denies it must deny either the evidence of sense or that of testimony. Hence, his argument must undermine the whole fabric of our knowledge of the past and of the absent. And thus it is radically and unquestionably subversive of itself. It proceeds upon the supposition that the events in question cannot be true, because they are contrary to the course of nature. But this very course of nature can only be established upon the principles of evidence which the objection has already denied, and hence the very fabric of the objection, by its own showing, crumbles into dust. Thus would infidelity, by an argument embosoming within itself its own manifest refutation, annihilate knowledge, dissipate science, and render it impossible, on the very principles of our nature, that either should ever have the shadow of an existence.

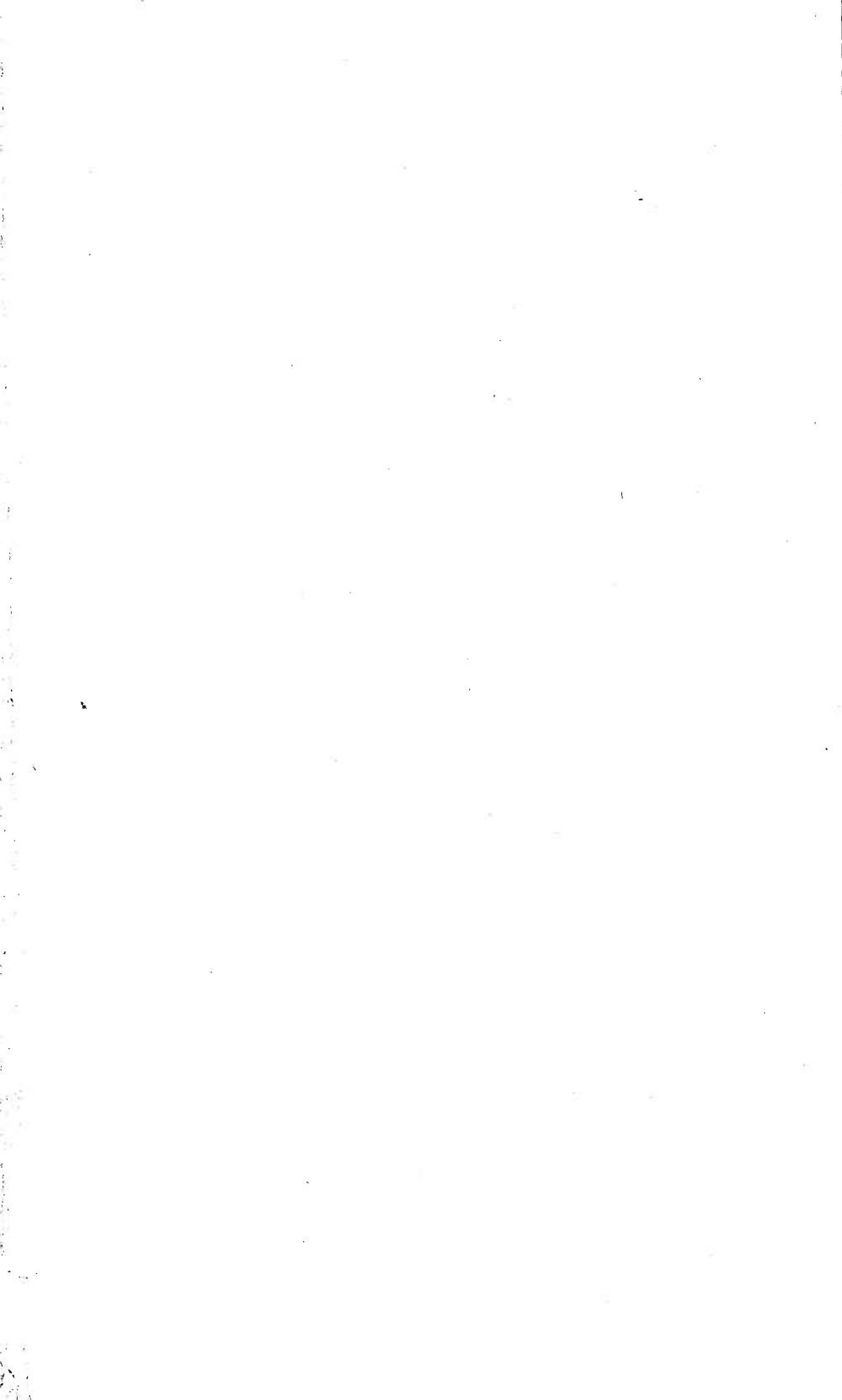
3. It cannot be denied that man is a material agent, and subject to the laws of matter, nor that the author of these laws is the Supreme Governor of the universe. It is equally undeniable, that man is a moral agent, subject also to moral laws, and that the author of these laws is the same supreme divinity. If a moral law of this world be discovered, it is as certain that God or-

dained it, at that he ordained the laws of galvanism or of electricity. And, hence, the book which contains these laws is clearly God's word, and fully and universally binding upon the conscience. Now, that the New Testament does contain the moral laws which were ordained for this system, is already clearly demonstrable. For nothing is the progress of science more remarkable, than for the flood of light which it is pouring upon this subject. Every moral and every social experiment, that has ever been made, bears witness to the same truth. And, hence, from its very adaptation to the social nature of man, the New Testament is evidently the law of God, and obligatory upon the conscience. Here then, by another and distinct medium of proof, do we arrive at the conclusion that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the sure word of prophecy.

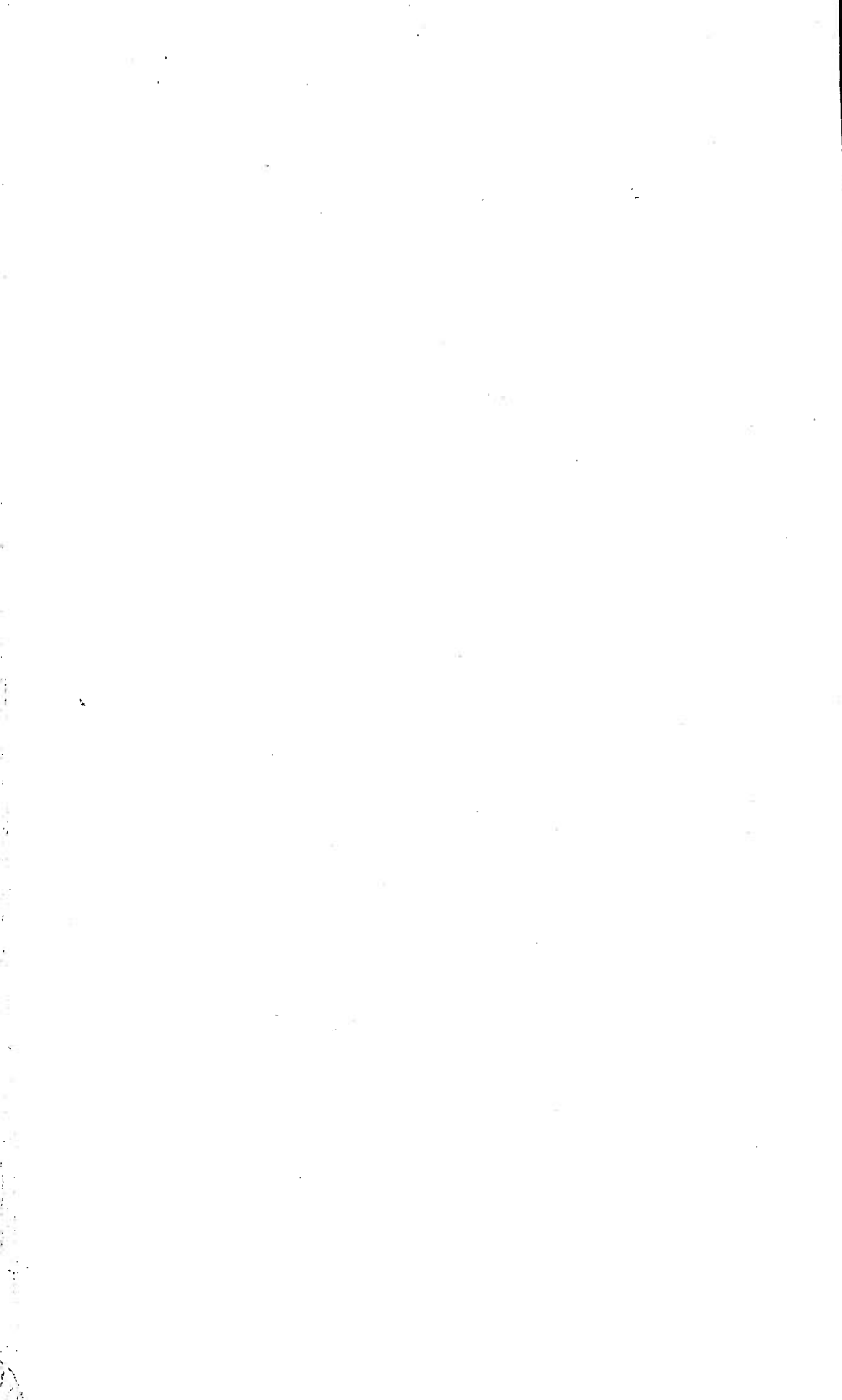
Christian brethren, you see how abundant is the evidence on which the word of our salvation rests. God has interwoven it with the very principles of science, that all knowledge must be overthrown, ere the foundation of our hope can be undermined. Nay, he has so constructed the world, that every thing we see and every thing we read of, bears testimony to the truth of revelation. Let us, then, in all the confidence of men who know that they have not followed cunningly devised fables, urge upon our fellow-men the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Affectionately and zealously, yet meekly, let us instruct those that oppose themselves, that peradventure God may give them

repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And, above all, let us show, by lives of consistent piety, and charity, that the religion which we profess has its proper effect upon our own souls. This is an argument which moves the moral as well as intellectual nature of man, and it has thus far been always irresistible.

Upon those who disbelieve the evidence of revelation, we would urge a single consideration. Friends and fellow-citizens : we have endeavored to set before you, in meekness, and with reason, some of the arguments which convince us, that our religion is from God, and that it will ultimately prevail. What we urge certainly has the appearance of truth. It is most unreasonable for you to turn from it without examination. With the sincerest desires for your present and your future welfare, we respectfully request you patiently, candidly, and thoroughly, to examine the subject. Having done this, we cease. The responsibility of your eternal destiny is in your own hands, and with devout prayers that God may lead you to a knowledge of himself, there do we leave it. Amen.



NOTE.—To the argument in the preceding sermon, it has been objected, that the author has not considered the obstacle to the triumph of the Gospel, arising from the depravity of the human heart, or its entire opposition to holiness. To this objection, the answer is briefly as follows. The argument is addressed either to believers, or unbelievers. To the Christian, the declaration of God in the scriptures, that the whole world shall be converted, is a full and sufficient warrant for entire belief. Those on the contrary who do not believe the bible, cannot urge, as an objection, the depravity of man, for this is a doctrine of *revelation*, whose authority they utterly disclaim. Or, if they urge it as an objection drawn from books which we believe, we are by all the rules of reasoning allowed to meet them with a statement of the revealed doctrine of the sovereign and efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit, which is abundantly sufficient to overcome all the obstacles arising from the opposition of a sinner's heart. As, therefore, the very mention of the objection, brings with it its own antidote, it was not in the body of the discourse brought into the account.



DISCOURSE XII.

THE TRIUMPHS OF THE REDEMPTION OVER THE APOSTACY.

But, not as the offence, so also is the free gift.—Rom. v. 15.

To illustrate the perfections of his nature, in promoting the happiness of his creatures, is the ultimate design of God, in all his works, throughout all places of his dominion. And, although an attempt has been made, to defeat this design, in the creation of our race; yet he has interfered, in such a manner, as not only to frustrate this attempt, but, over and above this, to cause the wrath of the adversary to praise him. He would have disappointed the views and destroyed the works of the Devil, in procuring the fall of our first parents, if he had merely restored them to the *SAME* condition, in which they were created;—if, after cancelling their obligation to punishment, through the merits of a Mediator, he had reinstamped his image upon

them, and renewed to them the employments and pleasures of the garden of Eden. But, instead of allowing the purpose of his grace to terminate here, he has taken occasion, from the Apostacy of man, to bring out, to the view and admiration of the Universe, a scheme of Redemption, by which, the ruinous consequences of sin are MORE than repaired ;—by which, his own character is rendered more glorious, in the view of his creatures, than it was before sin entered into the world ;—and, by which, a higher degree of dignity and happiness, is conferred upon man, than appertained to him, in the place of his primitive abode.

In conformity with this view of the subject, we here find the Apostle Paul, running a parallel between the FALL of man, as occasioned by the transgression of Adam ; and the RECOVERY of man, as brought about by the intervention and the sacrifice of Christ. The sin, which Adam committed, in his public character, as the representative of his posterity, he denominates “THE OFFENCE ;” because, it is the one great act of rebellion against God, which has brought all the millions of his sons and daughters into a state of condemnation and death. And the blessings, which are introduced into the world, through the mediation of Christ, he denominates “THE FREE GIFT ;” because, they are undeserved, on the part of man, and flow spontaneously, from the sovereign grace of God. Having set these two things in opposition to each other, he alleges that there is A DIFFERENCE between them,—that they are NOT

ALIKE, in the extent of their operation,—that the benefits of the one are MORE than sufficient to counterbalance the injuries and losses, which have been sustained, by the other. “NOT AS the offence, so also is the free gift.”—Or, as the same truth is otherwise expressed, in the twentieth verse, “Where sin abounded, grace did MUCH MORE abound.”

By the spirit of the passage, then, as thus explained, we are led immediately to the subject, which claims our attention, at the present time,—which is, THE TRIUMPHS OF THE REDEMPTION OVER THE APOSTACY. And, we shall endeavor to set before you, a part of the reality and glory of these triumphs, by inviting you to contemplate the Redemption

I. In its bearings upon THE CHARACTER OF GOD ;—in glorifying those perfections of his nature, which the Apostacy had dishonored, as well as, in bringing to light other views of his character, of which there were no indications before the Apostacy occurred. And

II. In its influence upon THE CHARACTER AND HAPPINESS OF MAN ;—in exalting him, to a degree of dignity and enjoyment, superior to that, of which the Apostacy deprived him.

I. In the first place, then, we invite you to contemplate the Redemption, in its bearings upon THE CHARACTER OF GOD ;—in glorifying those perfections of his nature, which the Apostacy had dishonored, as well as, in bringing to light other views of his character, of

which there were no indications before the Apostacy occurred.

How far, and in what light, Jehovah had manifested himself, in other parts of his empire, before the creation and fall of man, is a question, perhaps, to which we have no means of furnishing an adequate answer. It is sufficiently manifest, however, that, in every thing appertaining to that department of his works, to which we belong, he appeared as a being of infinite perfection and loveliness. Placing ourselves, in imagination, by the side of our first parents, while they remained in a state of innocence—whether we lift our eyes to Heaven, and consider those works of his fingers, which move through the wide expanse ; or look abroad over the earth, and survey the multitude and variety of creatures, with which he has peopled the air, the earth, and the sea—we are every where arrested, by obvious traces of his wisdom and power.—At the same time, we cannot resist the conviction, that he is a benevolent being ; because, in addition to the fact, that he can have no possible motive to be otherwise, there are convincing proofs of his goodness to be seen throughout all his works—especially, in the nature, and endowments, and condition of man. If the Creator had brought him into being, with a malevolent design, this design would, doubtless, have been so far accomplished, as to have rendered his existence a source of misery. But, instead of this, Adam no sooner became a living soul, than he rejoiced in his existence as desirable, and as constituting

a proper ground of thankfulness to God. In the formation of his body, as well as in the image and attributes of his soul, there were unequivocal marks of a disposition to make him a happy being. And the same disposition, was evidently acted out, in arranging all the external circumstances, in the midst of which he was placed. A garden, of exquisite beauty and fruitfulness, was planted for his accomodation ;—the sun, moon, and stars were fixed in the firmament of Heaven to give him light ;—the whole inferior creation, were placed under him, as their lord, and gathered around him, to contribute to his enjoyment ;—his life and happiness were suspended, upon the easy condition of avoiding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ;—and, this condition complied with, he had no reason to anticipate any thing, which would either molest him, or make him afraid.

But, when we have surveyed this scene of beauty and glory, from a point of time anterior to the Apostacy, let us transfer ourselves to a subsequent period, and see what a dark and mysterious cloud was drawn over it, when this event occurred. The noble structure, on account of which, the fabric of the material system had been built, is now lying in ruins ! The upright and excellent creature, whose head had been crowned with glory and honor, and on whose breast God had impressed the image of his own perfections, has been permitted to abuse his exalted privileges—to divest himself of the distinguished rank assigned to him in the

scale of being—and, by his follies and crimes, to degrade himself to a state of pollution, and infamy, and eternal abandonment from the favor of his Maker! How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! And, what shall we now say, of the propriety of creating a world, which was to become the theatre of such a catastrophe as this? Why were the wisdom and power of God employed, in making such extensive preparations, for the accommodation of a creature, who was so soon to despise his birthright, and bring himself down to a state of utter degradation and despair? Or what was there, in the momentary pleasures, which he enjoyed before his fall, to compensate for the shame and everlasting contempt, which he is now doomed to suffer?—It is not a satisfactory answer to this inquiry, to say—that the fall of man was his own voluntary act, and that the character of God should not be “evil spoken of,” on account of his conduct in destroying himself,—that the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator, are not less to be admired, because the creature has chosen to forfeit the blessings and privileges, which these attributes have conferred upon him—and, therefore, that all the darkness and horror of the dispensation is attributable to man himself, and not, in any measure, to the Author of his existence: Because, we are here met by the reflexion, that God seeth the end from the beginning—that he foreknows, because he foreordains, whatsoever comes to pass. Without stopping, at present, to discuss the

question, which relates to the nature of this ordination, we may safely affirm, that, when he spread out the Heavens, and stretched his line upon the foundations of the earth, he had the fall of man distinctly before his infinite mind. He saw, that the system, which he was about to create, would, without any peradventure, be darkened and defiled, by the introduction of sin. And therefore, the question still returns, encumbered with all its difficulties, why did he not refrain from originating and unfolding a scheme, which was to lead, with infallible success, to the production of this result?

At this point, in the progress of our reflexions, the scheme of the Redemption comes in, and exonerates the character of God, by informing us, that the hopeless condemnation of man for his apostacy, was no part of the eternal purpose, which he had purposed in himself;—that, before the fall of man occurred, he had determined to engraft upon this event, a new system of operations; and, thereby, to convince the whole intelligent creation, that, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life.—As the Author and Finisher of this scheme, he draws near to the scene of the Apostacy; and, contemplating the condition of the fallen creature, until his bowels of compassion begin to move, He takes him up, with all his guilt and pollution upon him—delivers him from the curse of the law—changes his heart, from the love of sin, to the love of holiness—purifies him from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit—and, finally, translates

him to another and more delightful part of his dominions, there to be confirmed, in the enjoyment of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And, when we review his character in the light of this consummation—when we see the creature, whom his wisdom permitted to fall, restored, by his compassion and grace, to a higher and more delightful habitation, than he occupied before he fell—when, instead of suffering for his sins, or even reposing amidst the groves of an earthly garden, we behold him walking over the green pastures, and beside the still waters of the heavenly Paradise—we are prepared to surrender all our unworthy suspicions; and to exclaim, without any reservation, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power !”

As interfering with this view of the subject, it may indeed be said, that the Redemption takes effect, only upon A PART of the apostate race,—that millions of the human family live and die, without an interest in its promises,—and therefore, that, however the character of God may be justified, in the case of those who are saved, his benevolence is still impeached in the case of them that are lost. The force of this objection, however, may be done away, by remembering, that the only reason why the administration of this scheme is accompanied by the condemnation of any, is, that they perseveringly refuse to acquiesce in the method of salvation which it proposes. It proclaims to all those, to whom it comes, that God has NO PLEASURE AT ALL,

in the death of those who reject the offers of his grace,—that WHOSOEVER WILL may take of the fountain of the water of life freely,—and that he WOULD RATHER that the wicked would turn from his evil way and live. And if men are so depraved, as to resist the tenderness of this appeal, and force their way to destruction, in opposition to the means which are thus used to reclaim them, they can have no reason to call in question his goodness, or to complain of his severity. He has offered them forgiveness and eternal life, as a free gift, and they are unwilling to receive it;—they have undervalued and despised his compassion, as well as transgressed his law;—and therefore, it behooves him, as the wise and righteous Governor of the universe, to punish them, in such a manner, as will show, that, while he is “abundant in goodness,” he “will by no means clear the guilty.”

Nor let it be supposed, that the benevolence of God, as recovered and set forth in the scheme of Redemption, is at all obscured, by the fact, that a large proportion of the human race are enveloped in the darkness of HEATHENISM;—and, therefore, have no access to the knowledge and offers of salvation. To those who reply against Him, by urging this objection, methinks I hear him condescending to say, “what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? I revealed the method of grace and salvation, to your first parents, before any of their children were born; and, thus, afforded them an opportunity of transmitting

a knowledge of its existence and blessings, to all the families of their posterity. After the light of this knowledge was lost, amid the growing wickedness of succeeding generations, I interfered, in righteous judgment, to prevent the multiplication of those who were born in ignorance ;—I sent the waters of a deluge, to sweep away the race of the ungodly ;—and caused the earth to be repeopled, by a family, the head of which was ‘a preacher of righteousness,’ and all the members of which had enjoyed the benefit of his instructions. And, that all may be still farther convinced that I am good and gracious, I have resolved to interfere once more—not by destroying those, who are sunk in ignorance and guilt, and again reducing the human race within the compass of a single family—but, by selecting and sending forth ambassadors, who shall circulate the tidings of salvation, until a knowledge of my ‘good-will to men,’ ‘shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.’ In addition to this, there are other views of this subject, to be presented to the consideration of the intelligent universe, at a future time : ‘what I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter :’ the day of the revelation of my righteous judgment is coming on apace : and, in the clearer light and more extensive discoveries of that day, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, that wisdom and benevolence, as well as justice and judgment, are the habitation of my throne.”

Returning from this digression, we proceed to remark, that the Redemption, not only brings out the character of God, from behind the cloud, which the apostacy had interposed, but discloses NEW VIEWS of his nature, of which there were no indications, in any of his previous works. It is in the constitution and developement of this scheme alone, that Jehovah comes forward, to the view of his creatures, in the great mystery of his existence, as FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. And through the medium of this discovery, increasing and overpowering rays of light break in upon his character from every quarter. The attribute of MERCY, makes its appearance, for the first time, and assumes a conspicuous place. The riches of his FORBEARANCE and LONG-SUFFERING are brought into visible existence. And the demands of his law, are shown to be consistent, with the claims of compassion. The Father appears, in the character of Law-giver and Judge, as entertaining an inflexible resolution to punish sin, and yet, as cherishing an unquenchable love for sinners : in his wisdom, he finds out a method, by which his mercy and truth can meet together, in saving them from destruction : he so loves the world as to give his only begotten Son, to perform the work of a mediator, between him and his fallen creatures : he proclaims his willingness to accept of his obedience and sufferings, as a substitute for their punishment : and he declares, that all who believe in him, as the appointed Saviour of them that are lost, shall be par-

doned and restored to favor. At the same time, the Son is brought before us, as descending from the Eternal Throne, and assuming the form of a servant, in order to accomplish the work which the Father has given him to do: exclaiming with cheerfulness, "Lo I come, (in the volume of the book, it is written of me) to do thy will O God," he enters the world in the character of a man of no reputation: he submits to the temptations of the devil, and the contradiction of sinners: he endures the ignominy and agonies of a painful and accursed death: and he resists every temptation to abandon this work, before it is finished, by saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And while the Father and the Son are thus revealed, the Holy Ghost is also manifested, as employing his influence in the furtherance of the same general design: he inclines the heart of fallen man, to accept the pardon, which the Father offers, through the sacrifice of the Son: he renews and sanctifies the soul, which has been depraved and polluted by sin: and he dwells in the heart of the new-born creature, as a Comforter and Guide, until he arrives at the end of his pilgrimage, and is translated to the place of his eternal rest.

And besides eliciting these views of the character of God, which are *entirely* new, the Redemption also throws a stronger light upon those attributes of his nature, which were *partially revealed*; and adds to the revenue of praise, which they are worthy to receive.

Contemplate this remark, in its application to his wisdom and power. Obvious traces of these attributes were to be seen, in the field of creation, which was open to our first parents, when they were brought into being; but how is our admiration of their glory increased, in view of his marvellous and mighty works, "in bringing many sons unto glory!" Survey the wondrous scheme of salvation, either in its contrivance, before the foundation of the world, or in its execution, in the fullness of time: think of the difficulty of punishing sin, and yet saving the sinner—of inflicting the curse, and yet dispensing mercy—of magnifying the law, and yet remitting its penalty—of maintaining the honor of the divine government, and yet restoring the rebel against its interests to happiness and Heaven: fix your attention especially on the character of the Mediator—on the wonderful constitution of his person and on the variety and manner of his triumphs over the power and policy of Satan: see him, adored by the angels from Heaven, and by the wise men of the East, though born in a stable, and lying in a manger: behold him, surrounded by a few fishermen and publicans, and, thereby, confounding the wisdom of philosophers and abasing the pride of kings: think of him, spoiling principalities and powers, by means of his apprehension and crucifixion as a malefactor—conquering death and disarming it of its sting, while wrapped in a winding sheet, and laid in a tomb—and, after he arose, employing the persecution of his followers, as the in-

strument of lifting up the standard of his cross, in every land: think, again, of the natural character and condition of those who are saved, and of the variety and power of the measures, which are employed, in preparing them for Heaven—in subduing the enmity of their minds, and bringing them to repentance—in convincing them of their guilt and leading them to “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”—in sanctifying them through the truth, sustaining them under their afflictions, and bruising Satan under their feet: think, moreover, of the difficulties and effects, of extending the knowledge and benefits of the Gospel to every creature—of casting down every high thing, which exalts itself against the progress of its truth—of confining the adversary to the bottomless pit, that he may no longer deceive the inhabitants of the earth—of converting the swords of all the nations into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, so as to produce abundance of peace, as long as the earth remaineth—and of, thereby, turning the wilderness into a fruitful field and causing the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose: and, finally, think of the resurrection both of the just and of the unjust—of all that are in their graves hearing the voice of the Son of God and coming forth—of the Heavens departing with a great noise, and the earth encircled by the fires of a universal conflagration—of the wicked consigned to everlasting punishment, and the righteous exalted to life eternal. And, in view of these exhibi-

tions of divine wisdom and power, you may well confess, that all previous manifestations of these attributes have "no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth."

The same remark will apply, with equal propriety, to the HOLINESS and JUSTICE of God. Evidences of these attributes were to be seen, before the fall, in the character in which man was created—in the properties and penalty of the law, under the operation of which he was placed—and in the arraignment and condemnation of the angels "that kept not their first estate." But how is the brightness of these manifestations increased, when we bring before our minds the prominent events, which occur under the mediatorial reign of Jesus Christ,—when we go back to the old world, and see it overspread by a deluge of water, because the wickedness of man was great in the earth—when we visit the plain of Sodom, and see the fire and brimstone descending from God out of Heaven,—when we go up to the summit of Mount Sinai, where God spake with a voice, and delivered his law, while the noise of the trumpet waxed louder and louder,—when we enter the abodes of the lost, and contemplate the end of them that obey not the Gospel,—and, more than all, when we advance to the scene of the crucifixion, and behold the victim of Divine Justice, expiring as a sacrifice for sin. As a person of the Godhead, he was a Son whom the Father loved; and yet, when he offered himself, as the friend and substitute of sinners, there was no mitiga-

tion of the requirement, or penalty of the law: the wrath of God was poured out upon him, until his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground,—until he asked, with strong crying and tears, “O MY FATHER! IF IT BE POSSIBLE, LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME,”—until he exclaimed, in the agony and bitterness of his feelings, “MY GOD! MY GOD! WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”—Here is an event, which proclaims, with a voice a thousand times louder and more impressive than all others combined, that the Lord our God is holy, and that he “will by no means clear the guilty.”

Moreover, the Redemption has an extensive effect, in enlarging and elevating our conceptions of the TRUTH and FAITHFULNESS of God. In the primitive condition of the world, these attributes appeared, in fulfilling the threatened curse upon the fallen angels, and also, in bestowing all the good which was promised or implied, in the covenant which was made with our first parents. But who can recount the number and variety of cases, in which the same perfections are revealed, in those works of providence, which belong to the administration of grace? We might bring before your minds a long catalogue of predictions, and promises, and threatenings: we might refer you to the prophecies which relate to the advent of the Mèssiah—to his character and condition, during the period of his humiliation—to the circumstances attending his death—and to the glorious triumphs of his resurrection and ascen-

sion: we might tell you of the pledge which the Father has given to the Son, that he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and that he shall reign until all enemies are put under his feet: we might remind you of the numerous engagements of God to his church and people, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against them, as a body; and that all things shall work together for their good, as individuals: and we might direct your attention to a thousand judgments of his mouth, respecting the punishment of the wicked, both in this world, and in that which is to come. And having done this, we might say in regard to all these particulars, as far as the time of their fulfilment has arrived, that "not one thing hath failed"—that "all are come to pass."

But the limits of this exercise will not allow us to pursue the illustration of this part of the subject any farther: nor is it necessary in reference to the main point, which we have in view. We have followed the Triumphs of the Redemption far enough to see, that, while it redeems and re-establishes the character of God, in those respects in which it would otherwise have been dishonored by the Apostacy, it also brings to light a variety of other and more glorious views of his nature, of which there were no traces in any of the previous works of creation or providence.

We now direct your attention,

II. To its influence upon THE CHARACTER AND HAPPINESS OF MAN;—in exalting him, to a degree of

dignity and enjoyment, superior to that, of which the Apostacy deprived him.

In entering on this topic, my hearers, I do not forget, that, as partakers in the benefits of the Redemption, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;"—and therefore that, for the present, we must content ourselves with knowing and phophecying "in part." At the same time, I also remember, that, as in the natural world, there are first fruits of the ground, which cheer the heart of the husbandman, inasmuch as they exhibit a sign and a pledge of the approaching harvest, so, in the moral world, there are "first fruits of the spirit," which point us to the consummation of all things, and afford us some idea of "the glory which shall be revealed in us, when "that which is perfect shall be come," and "that which is in part shall be done away."

Even in the present life, there are graces and virtues brought into existence, by means of the Redemption, which place the recovered sinner on a much more lofty eminence, in some respects, than was occupied by Adam before he fell. That he was a perfectly holy being is not, indeed, to be denied. All the affections of his heart, and all the actions of his life, were in perfect conformity with the will of God. But his views of the Divine character were comparatively limited and obscure; and therefore, he had fewer objects of faith presented to his mind, and less important considerations to excite his love. He was acquainted with God as Creator and Preserver; but he knew him not, in the great

mystery of godliness, as the Saviour of them that were lost. He was ignorant of the Father, as loving a world of inexcusable rebels, and giving his only Son to die for their salvation ;—he had never heard of the Son, as bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and therefore had never been made conformable to his death, or felt the power of his resurrection ;—and he had no information of the Holy Ghost, as proceeding from the Father and the Son, to open the eyes of the blind, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The consequence is, that the humblest saint on earth, believes in God, in a variety of respects, in which our first parents had no faith at all, and entertains an affection for God, on account of a variety of important and affecting reasons, which were never brought to bear upon their minds.

And while the subject of redeeming grace has more *faith* and *love* than belonged to Adam in a state of innocence, he has the advantage, in regard to that numerous class of virtues and graces, which are taught in the school of *affliction*. Before sin entered into the world, there was no theatre on which these virtues could be displayed. For how could there be firmness and fortitude, where there were no dangers to be encountered, and no foes to be conquered ? How could there be meekness and patience, where there were no injuries to be forgiven, and no sufferings to be endured ? How could there be self-abasement, where there was no transgression ?—resignation, where there was no bereave-

ment?—pity, where there was no distress?—charity, where there were no wants?—or a trial of faith and hope, where there were no temptations to unbelief and despair?—And, as these ennobling emotions of the human soul had no dwelling-place in the paradise of bliss, neither could they have been brought into existence, if the fall of man had been a final measure, and all the race had been sentenced, without hope, to a state of endless despair. Here, therefore, the Triumphs of the Redemption are visible and glorious. It allows those sufferings, which are the consequence of the Apostacy, in some measure, to continue; and yet overrules them, as the means of exalting the moral character of them that are saved, and raising them to a higher and more dignified station in the scale of being.—To form some idea of the important and extensive bearings of this remark, look, for one moment, at the character of an individual, who is BORN AGAIN under the administration of Divine grace, and see what an assemblage of high and heroic qualities are gathered around him, to which he must always have been a stranger, if sin and suffering had never been introduced into the world. Look at the father of the faithful, wandering as an outcast from his native land—dwelling in tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise—binding his only son upon the altar of sacrifice, and lifting up his hand to plunge the instrument of death into his bosom—accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead. Look at

Moses, after floating in his ark of bulrushes on the waters of the Nile, coming to years of discretion, and spurning all the honors of a court, for the sake of his country, and for the honor of his country's God—for-saking Egypt, in the exercise of faith, not fearing the wrath of the king—and choosing rather, to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, for a season. Look again at Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephtha, David also, and Samuel, and the Prophets, subduing kingdoms—working righteousness—obtaining promises—stopping the mouths of lions—quenching the violence of fire—escaping the edge of the sword—waxing valiant in fight—and turning to flight the armies of the aliens. Look at Paul, the messenger of God to the Gentiles—troubled on every side, yet not distressed—perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken—cast down, but not destroyed—trusting in his Redeemer, while surrounded with danger—and exclaiming, in view of the things which were to befall him at Jerusalem, “None of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.” Or, to come still nearer to ourselves, look at the Martins and Brainerds of modern times—submitting to privation and fatigue, in all their forms, for the sake of Christ and the advancement of his kingdom—entertaining a love for the souls of their fellow-men, and for the glory of God, which is stronger than death

—leaving father and mother and brethréen and sisters and houses and lands, to preach among the Heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ. In each of these cases you behold the “new-creature,” which the Redemption has formed out of the ruins of the fall. And while we trace the lines of dignity and beauty, which he exhibits, even in his present unfinished state, is it saying too much to affirm, that we have before us, a higher style of character, than was seen in the person of Adam, as he came from the hands of his Creator? Adam was a servant of God, in conformity with the inclination and tendency of his holy nature, and without any inducement or temptation to be otherwise; but the heir of salvation is a servant of God, against flesh and blood, against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places:—Adam was resigned to the will of God, in the midst of uninterrupted and unchanging prosperity; but the follower of Jesus Christ exclaims, “Father! not my will, but thine be done,” in tribulation and distress, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, and in cold and nakedness:—Adam was beneficent in all his actions, while every thing around him was calculated to favor his purpose; but the soldier of the cross goes about doing good, in the face of ingratitude and reproach, yea, moreover, of stripes and imprisonment, and dungeons, and death. In short, all the virtues of the first man were cherished without opposition, while all the graces of the new-creature

are brought into exercise amidst obstacles, from within, and from without. And, when we behold him going forth, in view of these obstacles, conquering and to conquer,—when we see him advancing, with a steady pace, amidst hardships and dangers, to the rest that remaineth for the people of God—rejoicing in hope—patient in tribulation—and holding fast the beginning of his confidence unto the end ; we cannot but confess, that, in the features of his character, there is a dignity and greatness, which did not belong to our first parents, while they remained in a state of innocence.

At the same time, it must be confessed, that there is one respect, in which the subject of the Redemption always remains inferior to the first Adam, while he continues in the present world. Amidst all the new and higher virtues, which improve and elevate *the style* of his character, the most eminent saint on earth is sanctified only in part : there is a law of sin, in his members, which wars against the law of his mind—sometimes bringing him into captivity—and often inducing him to exclaim, O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? And therefore, in order to have an adequate view of the Triumphs, after which we are now inquiring, we must cross the line which separates time from eternity, and look at the condition of the redeemed, as inhabitants of that place, into which nothing shall enter that defileth ; neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. Having washed their robes, and made them white

in the blood of the Lamb, they have nothing more to do with the defilement and difficulties of sin : this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality : death is swallowed up in victory : all tears are wiped away from their eyes : and, in view of the positive sources of happiness, to which they have access, we are authorized to say, that all the enjoyments of Adam in Paradise, were not worthy to be compared, with the portion, which they are appointed to receive.

To illustrate the truth of this position, I remark, that the inhabitants of Heaven, will have a much more extensive view of THE WORKS OF GOD, both in Creation and Providence, than was enjoyed by Adam in his primitive state.—I know it has been the opinion of some, that, while he continued in innocence, his eyesight was so acute and penetrating, that distant objects were seen by him, which are rendered visible to us, only by the aid of a magnifying power. In support of this opinion, however, there is neither the dictate of reason, nor the authority of the word of God. It is natural to believe, that the objects which lay within the circumference of his vision, were the same objects, which might be seen by any of us, if we were placed in the same situation ; such, for example, as the trees and flowers which surrounded him in every direction, —the living animals, which were reposing in quietness and contentment in the shades of the Garden,—the Sun, as he held his daily course through the skies,—

and the Moon and stars, as they gilded the vault of night, and enlightened and cheered the place of his abode. But, instead of having their vision thus confined to a remote corner of the Universe of God, the subjects of the Redemption are informed, by the Great Prophet himself, that they "shall know hereafter" all that he is now doing and concealing from their view. Elevated to a seat with the Captain of salvation upon his throne, a scene of greater wonders will be unfolded, than has ever entered into the heart of man in his present condition: millions of other worlds, which now exist and of which we have no knowledge, may pass in never-ending succession before their eyes: new objects of their Maker's creation may come forth, in countless multitudes, in the progress of their eternal existence: works of Providence, also, which are now unknown, will be brought to light: dark and mysterious dispensations, will be explained and justified: and the universal agency of the Father of lights will be seen, diffusing life and joy throughout the boundless extent of his holy and happy creation.

In connexion with this idea, it is worthy of special remark, that, in Heaven, there will be A CLOSER UNION AND MORE INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD HIMSELF, than was ever enjoyed amidst the delights of the terrestrial Paradise. It is true, indeed, that Adam enjoyed all the intimacy, which naturally arose out of the moral relation which he sustained to God, as his Creator

and Preserver. But, as this moral relation will be different in the case of the redeemed, both in its nature and extent, it follows, that their access to the fullness of the Godhead, will be different also. In addition to the fact, that God is their Maker and Upholder, they are his peculiar offering, by virtue of his regenerating and adopting grace : they are "joined," in such a sense as to be "one spirit," to him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person :"¹ God manifest in the flesh is the head of that body, of which they are the members : He is the vine and they are the branches : He is the elder-brother, and they are the joint-heirs : and as they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," they must be partakers of that glory which was given to him. "The glory," says Jesus, "which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."² Of the nature of this mysterious union, I pretend not to speak, in the language of description. I lay it before you, in the simple and expressive words of Him, by whom it is promised ; and I leave it with you to imagine, what an addition it will make to the inheritance of the saints in light. It is a principle of universal application, that union and communion exist together and are co-extensive. And, if so, it is too much for the tongue of man, or even the lips of an angel, to tell what God has prepared for

those, who shall see him face to face, in the intercourse and endearments of the heavenly world.

Again : it is obvious that the principle of CONTRAST will have a peculiar and powerful influence, in rendering Heaven more sweet and precious to the redeemed, than it could have been, if they had never had any experience of the guilt and miseries of sin. Who has not read with interest the history of the prodigal son, as recorded in the Gospel ; and observed the operation of this principle, in increasing the amount of his happiness, after he returned to his father's house, in which there was "bread enough and to spare?" Who does not know, that a haven of rest is much more delightful to the feelings of a mariner, who has been delivered from the dangers of shipwreck, than to the feelings of an individual, who has never encountered the horrors of a storm ? Or who is unacquainted with the fact, that a pardon, granted to a malefactor at the place of execution, is a thousand times more welcome, than the continuance of life to a person, who has never been condemned to die ? On the same principle, then, the happiness of Heaven, even if it were not superior in other respects, must be more exquisite to the redeemed, than the joys of the earthly Paradise were to Adam. His happiness was without the knowledge of sorrow ; but theirs is enjoyed, in the remembrance of miseries endured, and enemies conquered, and dangers escaped. They were dead and are alive again, they were lost and

are found : they have entered into the haven of eternal rest, after being exposed to a storm, the horrors of which, no imagination can paint, and no tongue can describe : and they are exulting in the possession and prospect of a life, which shall never end, in full recollection of the fact, that once they were sentenced to a death, which shall never die.

It should also be distinctly remembered that the happiness of the redeemed will be greatly increased, by reflecting upon THE LONG AND COMPLICATED SCHEME OF MERCY, which has brought them to its possession. The happiness of Adam was conferred by a simple act of creating goodness, and was, therefore, a part of his original constitution. But theirs is a gift, which did not belong to them by nature, and is the result of an extended plan of undeserved and sovereign grace,—a plan, in the execution of which all the perfections of God are employed,—and which has given rise to a train of events, which is to instruct, and astonish, and enrapture all the holy creation. Allow your imaginations, for one moment, to annihilate the time and space, by which you are separated from the company and employments of the heavenly world : see the glorified company, sitting down upon the banks of the river of life, and recounting to each other the prominent occurrences in the history of their salvation : they go back to its origin in the eternal counsels of the Sacred Three, and trace its gradual developement through every dis-

pensation since the creation and fall : they talk of the preparatory institutions and events of the Old Testament œconomy,—the appointment of sacrifices,—the calling of Abraham, and the history of his seed in the line of Isaac and Jacob,—the delivery of the moral law, and the typical ceremonies of the Tabernacle and Temple,—the ministry of angels,—the predictions of Prophets,—and the frequent appearances of the angel of the Covenant, in the form of a man : they, then, refer to the wonders, which have fallen out, under the dispensation of the Gospel,—the union of God and man, in the person of Jesus Christ,—his birth in a manger,—his life of poverty and sorrow,—his ignominious and painful death,—his glorious resurrection,—his triumphant ascension,—his intercession at the right hand of God,—and the mission of the Holy Ghost, with all the signs and miracles which have followed : and last of all, they expatiate upon the practical operation and benefits of this system, as exemplified in their own experience, while in a course of preparation for Heaven,—the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost,—sanctification through the truth,—support and consolation in view of the promises,—angels sent forth as ministering spirits,—afflictions working out the peaceable fruits of righteousness,—death deprived of its sting,—the body delivered from the corruption of the grave,—and the way thus prepared for the whole man, to be perfectly and eternally happy, in the presence and enjoyment of God. At

the conclusion of this detail, their immortal voices break forth into a new song—as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder—and “no man can learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which are redeemed from the earth.”

I only add, that the happiness of the glorified subjects of the Redemption will be UNINTERRUPTED and ETERNAL. How long Adam remained in a state of innocence, we are not informed. But the result has sufficiently proved, that the constitution, under which he was placed, was of such a nature, as to admit the possibility of his fall, from the estate, in which he was created. In an unguarded and fatal hour, he approached the tree, which he had been commanded to avoid; and, in consequence of this transgression, was banished from the presence of his Maker, and from the enjoyment of his favor. But no such reverse as this will ever occur among the ransomed inhabitants of Heaven. Their life, from the moment of their conversion on earth, has been hid with Christ in God: instead of being committed to their own keeping, it is laid up, as a sacred deposit, in the hands of Him, who is able to save unto the uttermost: and, because he lives, they shall live also. By virtue of his promise and power, their kingdom, is an everlasting kingdom—their crown, a crown that fadeth not away—their salvation, an eternal salvation—and their life, an everlasting life. No tempter will ever enter their dwelling-place, to seduce them from their allegiance to God: no cloud of sorrow

will ever darken the prospect of happiness, which lies before them : no unexpected and unavoidable calamity will ever interrupt the perpetuity or perfection of their bliss : "there shall be no more curse : " "they shall reign for ever and ever."

In confining your attention, in this discourse, to the operations of grace, in glorifying the character of God and improving the condition and happiness of man, I have not intended to intimate, that these are the only Triumphs of the Redemption over the Apostacy. Besides other fields, for the display of these victories, which may be revealed to us hereafter, the word of God, if I do not mistake its meaning, allows us to believe,—that THE MATERIAL SYSTEM ITSELF, which has been the theatre of the Apostacy, will be delivered, by the Redemption, from all the effects of the curse, and restored to more than its pristine beauty and glory. Else, what is the meaning of that promise, which invites us to look for "new Heavens and a new earth," after "the first Heaven, and the first earth" are passed away?—and why are we informed, that this promise will be fulfilled on "the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" For one, I love to stand, in the light of this promise, and indulge the expectation, that, as Jerusalem is to be trodden down of the Gentiles only until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, so the earth will remain under the bondage of corruption only until the time of the restitution of all things.

Then it will be purified by fire, and will appear, in something like the resurrection state of the redeemed themselves. It is sown in sin, it will be raised in righteousness : it is sown under the curse, it will be raised under a blessing : it is sown in sorrow, it will be raised in joy. Instead of bringing forth thorns and briars, the trees of life will spring up spontaneously upon its surface, like willows by the water courses : instead of waiting for the returns of autumn, it will yield its fruit every month : and, instead of resounding with the mourning and lamentation of its children, the redeemed will come to it, in their eternal excursions of pleasure, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Yes, my hearers, for aught that appears to the contrary, the earth, as thus purified, will ever continue to be a delightful place of resort to the nations of them that are saved. There is no absurdity in believing, that they will revisit the places of their former abode, and linger, with feelings of unbounded delight, around the scenes of their former labors and sufferings,—that they will walk around Gethsemane, and over the summit of Mount Calvary, with an increasing sense of their obligation to Him, who loved them and gave himself for them,—and that their united voice will be heard, in every part of what is now the wilderness and solitary place, exclaiming, “Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation ; and

hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign on the earth."

In view of what has been said, I remark,

1. *That GOD'S END in creating the world, was WORTHY OF HIMSELF.* If our first parents had never fallen, it would then have appeared, that his only design, in forming the heavens and the earth, was to provide a place of accommodation for them ; and in doing this, to make such a display of his own perfections, as these works of nature were calculated to exhibit. But, having before our eyes the recorded Triumphs of the Redemption over the Apostacy, we ascertain that, when he employed his wisdom and power in creating the world, he had an ulterior and more important object in view,—that he was erecting a stage, for other and grander exhibitions than appeared in "the things which were made,"—that he was preparing a nursery, not for a single pair of intelligent creatures, who were destined to no higher employment than cultivating the garden of Eden, but for "a great multitude which no man can number," who were to be trained up for immortality and prepared to shine as stars in the firmament of his glory for ever and ever,—that he was laying out a field, on which the contest between himself and the adversary, who had already raised the standard of rebellion in Heaven, was to issue in a decisive and final victory,—that he was fitting up an apartment, which was to be the birth-place and the abode of HIM, by whom the jarring interests of his empire were to be reconciled and

adjusted,—and that he was erecting a building, from which, the highest lessons of instruction, on the subjects of his manifold wisdom and superabounding grace, were to be sent forth to the farthest limits of the intelligent universe.

2. *All complaints against the providence of God, in permitting sin to enter the world, are as UNREASONABLE as they are impious.* The same wisdom, which permitted the Apostacy, has devised the Redemption: the same Being, who declares that “the wages of sin is death,” announces that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord:” the same sentence, which reports that “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” reiterates the assurance, that, “by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” It is, therefore, the fault of every sinner himself, if he remains a sufferer, in consequence of the fall. Nothing else than his own wilful rejection of the overtures of pardoning mercy and boundless grace, can prevent him from receiving the forgiveness of sins, and becoming a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, to an inheritance, as far surpassing the first paradise, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

3. *How aggravated will be THE CONDEMNATION OF UNBELIEVERS!* In refusing to avail themselves of the blessings of the Redemption, they are not only guilty of the crime of self-murder, in the highest degree; inasmuch as they are rejecting an offer of deliverance from impending ruin, and of restoration to the

most exalted happiness, which is enjoyed among finite beings:—but they are turning away, with cold and contemptuous neglect, from the capital measure, which God has devised, for revealing himself to his creatures, and, thereby, filling the Universe, with sources of unbounded admiration and joy. As far as the influence of their example is concerned, they are proclaiming to all around them, that there is nothing in the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, which ought to command their attention and sway their affections,—that there is nothing in the love of the Father, in sending his Son to be their Saviour, and in the compassion and condescension of the Son, in dying for their sins, for which they ought to be grateful—that the Heaven, which God is offering to believers, in the room of the first Paradise, has “no form or comeliness” in their estimation, and “no beauty that they should desire” it,—and that more important matters, than all these, are demanding their attention, in the daily employments, in which they are engaged—in the “farms,” which they are cultivating—in the “merchandise,” in which they are dealing—or, in the civil and social duties, which they are required to perform. On this account, they are adjudged to be guilty of the highest and most daring of all the acts of rebellion, which have ever been committed, against the “King of kings and Lord of lords;”—and, in proportion to the magnitude of their crime, will be the measure of their

punishment. "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for them." And if so, who can dwell, with that "devouring fire," which is prepared for them, in the world to come!—and how impressive the language, which is addressed to them, by the spirit of the Prophets," "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little!" "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you!"

4. *Let all the upright on earth and in Heaven, sing unto the Lord* A NEW SONG; *for he hath done MARVELLOUS THINGS: his right hand and his holy arm have gotten him* THE VICTORY." Great events, and especially important triumphs, have usually been attended with public rejoicings. When the system of creation came forth, in its primitive beauty and glory, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy;"—when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, with singing and dancing and instruments of music, answering each other, as they played, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands;"—when "the First-begotten" was brought into the world, the command was given, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and, in obedience to this command, a multitude of the heavenly

host were heard, exclaiming over the manger at Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men :"—and, when the victories of the Gospel, over the policy and power of Antichrist, shall be complete, a loud voice will be heard, in the midst of Heaven, saying, "Fear God, and give glory to him ; for the hour of his judgment is come—Babylon is fallen ! is fallen !" Great events, and glorious triumphs, have been occupying our attention, in the preceding discourse. We have been surveying the victories of redeeming love, from their commencement in eternity to their consummation in the fullness of time ;—and, therefore, in retiring from the sanctuary of God to night, it eminently becomes us to say, while we endeavour to catch the spirit of the exclamation, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever : and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ; Amen and Amen.



DISCOURSE XIII.

GOD EXALTED AND CREATURES HUMBLLED BY THE GOSPEL.

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.—
1 Cor. i. 31.

THAT part of the argument in support of divine revelation which is assigned to me, is drawn from “The effect of the Gospel in exalting the Creator and in humbling the creature:” not in *degrading* the creature;—in abasing the pride of man, in bringing sinners to repentance and self-condemnation and a willingness to be saved by free grace, and in laying the whole holy creation in sweet humility at the feet of a discovered God.

I have nothing to do with those unhappy men, if such there are,—those moral monsters,—who deny the being of a God. And if there is a God, we must suppose him connected with the visible universe as its author and upholder, and not, like the supreme god of

the Brahmins, in a state of eternal repose and indifference; for in no other way are we led to the belief of his existence but by arguing from effects to their cause. If the things which we see are not the productions of his power, we have no proof of his existence. If there is a God, we must suppose him wise and just and good; for every denier of revelation who is not an atheist or a semi-atheist, holds that this is evident from his works and from reason. If there is a God thus wise and good, who has given being to a rational offspring, and fitted up a world for their habitation, and makes all nature contribute to their support and comfort, we must suppose him to have an interest in their happiness. If he has an interest in their happiness, and is himself wise and holy, we must suppose that he would seek to found their happiness upon holy order,—the exercise of benevolence and justice; for without this foundation no social happiness can exist. If he is their Creator, and so their Proprietor, with a right of course to control them, and if he wishes to found their happiness upon holy order, we must conclude that he would put them under law. And if they are under law, that law must be enforced by penalties; for without a penalty it is no law, but mere advice. And if they are to obey, they must be influenced by motives drawn from the character of the Lawgiver and from their relations to him. And if they are to be influenced by such motives, it is of infinite importance that he should be manifested to them in all his relations and in

all the glories of his character. If he seeks their highest happiness, he will fill the universe with the knowledge of his perfections ; for these constitute the highest objective ground of creature happiness ; and a sight of them assures creatures that the universe is safe, that all things will issue well, and leads them to that communion with the Eternal Mind in which their highest blessedness consists. As then God loves righteousness,—as he wishes to enforce a holy and benignant moral government,—as he regards the happiness of his creatures, he must seek to fill the universe with the manifestations of his glory, and thus exalt himself and sink them into reverence and adoration.

That men are sinners I shall assume. Every page of history, every glance of the eye, every report of an enlightened conscience attests it. If then there is any salvation for them, it must be by grace, that is, by favour to the ill-deserving. And such a salvation cannot fail to exalt God and humble the sinner.

None will deny that the world are proud. But lest some should shelter a favourite principle under this name, I will define the thing proscribed. Pride is the selfish erection of our own will, our own wisdom, our own honour, our own power, our own importance, against the rights of God and his creatures. This has done more than any other thing to arm the world against its Maker. "Only by pride cometh contention." It has been the cause of more than half the strife that has agitated the universe. A salvation then from sin

must put down pride. A salvation sent to struggle against the pride of a world, must meet its vital throb and break its heart by overwhelming it with shame and everlasting contempt.

In any system of salvation then which should come from heaven, it might be expected that its main tendency would be to confound the pride of man, to humble sinners, and to glorify God. If you can find a system professing to come from God, which puts honour upon him by bringing out his perfections to view,—by supporting his rights, his claims, his government ; which abases pride, and brings sinners to a spirit the most self-condemning, the most ready to justify God, full of adoring views of his free grace and their eternal and infinite indebtedness ; you have found a system which accords with the truth of things, which is friendly to the interests of the universe, and must have emanated, not from an impudent imposture, but from the eternal source of truth and love.

The tendency of the Gospel to exalt God and humble the creature, appears,

I. In its outward administration ;

II. In its texture ;

III. In its application.

I. In its outward administration. This includes,

(1.) The humble appearance of Christ in our world : born of an obscure parent,—born in a manger,—brought up at the trade of a carpenter,—in his public ministry not having where to lay his head,—supported by the

charity of his female followers,—in his highest triumph riding into his royal city on “the foal of an ass,”—sorting with fishermen,—“despised and rejected of men,”—arraigned before Pilate,—beaten and spit upon in the Pretorium,—condemned to the death of a Roman slave,—and crucified between two malefactors.

All this belonged indeed to his atonement; but it answered other ends. It stained the “pride” of human “glory,” and taught his disciples to condemn it, and to say, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” It taught them humility and self-denial, by throwing upon them the influence of an humble and self-denying religion, of which “the cross of Christ” is every where put for the armorial ensign. It attacked the pride of man in its most sensible part, and with the penetrating weapon of a living example of humility. It “made foolish the wisdom of this world.”

When we understand the reasons of this humble appearance of Christ, we see in it the wisdom of God; but had it been left to us beforehand, we should have assigned him the most magnificent state. Thus *did* the wisdom of man pronounce. The Jews expected their Messiah to appear as a mighty conqueror, to break their Roman yoke and raise them to the dominion of the world. But God confounded the wisdom of men. And why was this deemed a good? Because men vainly conceived that they could discover every

thing relating to God and duty and a future state, and were too proud to learn of him, and arrayed their wisdom against the religion of heaven. The Jewish rabbins and Grecian philosophers did this. Such an exhibition of weakness in one who claimed divine honours and came to found a new religion, was to "the Jews a stumbling block" and to "the Greeks foolishness." Modern infidels and Socinians do this. They will march right over any doctrine which their boasted wisdom condemns, whatever the word of God may say. Indeed the pride of man, showing itself in lofty pretensions to the omniscience of wisdom, was seen to be the most intrepid and unyielding enemy which the religion of heaven had to encounter. It therefore was a main point in the outset to overwhelm this enemy with convictions of his own ignorance and folly and of the far superior wisdom of God.

In all these proud pretensions reason aspires to a place for which it was never designed. It is not its province to penetrate the mysteries of the universe by its own ken, but to work up into judgments materials furnished by information. It is the eye, but it cannot see without light. Its business is not to discover intuitively the secrets of the divine mind, but to examine the furnished proofs of the being and perfections of God and of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures; and having digested these, to study the contents of the Bible, and to believe unhesitatingly what is there revealed. How can reason discover the unrevealed mind

of God? It must be omniscient or inspired to discover the unexpressed mind of a creature. But this it never pretends to do. The only mind in the universe which it dares to subject to its ordeal, is the Infinite Mind. Now between us and God there is infinitely more distance than between your child and the Emperor of China. Put that child then to tell, without any information, what are the character and thoughts and purposes of the Emperor of China; and how would he succeed? But you say, God has revealed himself in his works. Allow that he has in part, yet nothing there shows the manner of his existing, the details of his law, with what severity he will punish, whether or on what conditions he will pardon, what are his decrees respecting the formation of the human character, and many other things. If reason can discover these, it not only is the eye, but forms the light itself. Supposing your child had evidence that the Emperor of China is wise and good, how could he know, without information, a thousand of his personal matters, the laws of his empire, with what severity he will punish, whether or on what conditions he will pardon, and a million of things respecting the regulation of trade, the internal police, and the complicated interests of a vast empire? But no kingdom does reason presume to scan by its own light, but that which comprehends all worlds. In no other science but that which relates to the incomprehensible God and to the interests and government of the universe, does it attempt to build on its own inde-

pendent discoveries. The anatomist does not presume to tell you how a man ought to be made, but with all submission proceeds to examine the animal system which God has exposed to his view. In all the natural sciences reason can make discoveries, but how? merely by examining the facts which God has spread out before it, and from them inferring a more general fact or law, and then arguing from that law to explain other phenomena not susceptible of examination. Here are the analysis and synthesis of the Newtonian school, the only organs of discovery known to philosophy.

And why does man act so differently in this case from what he does in all others? Because in other sciences he wishes to obtain accurate knowledge; in this, relief to his conscience and fears and mortified pride. He does not like God, and wishes to modify him after his own taste, and *insists* on doing this, and is self-sufficient enough to think that he can do it without mistake, and will by no means consent to owe allegiance to a God that is not after his own mind. Thus the heathen, because "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," changed his glory "into an image made like to corruptible man." The process in both cases is alike, and the motive is exactly the same.

(2.) Another way in which the outward administration of the Gospel took the pride of the world, was in the weakness of the instruments employed, the simplicity of their preaching, and their triumphant success. Instead of angels or Jewish doctors or Grecian philo-

sophers, Christ chose fishermen and publicans and tent-makers to breast an embattled world,—the bigotry of priests, the pride of philosophers, the interest of shrine-makers, the policy of kings, and the impetuous current of the carnal heart. And as temples fell and churches rose before them, he selected the materials of the church and of the ministry, not from the “wise” and “mighty” and “noble,” but from the “foolish,” the “weak,” the “base,” the “despised,” “to confound” and “bring to nought” the noble, wise, and mighty; “that no flesh should glory in his presence;” that none might say, I was selected because I was great or wise,—thus exalting worldly distinctions and hiding the free grace of God; that none might say, My own hand hath done it; “that the excellency of the power” might “be of God and not of” man; that the *supernatural* power of God might appear and attest the truth of the Gospel; and that his sovereignty might be shown in the distributions of his grace. For reasons such as these, Jesus himself “rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

In the opening of the first Epistle to the church in Corinth, (a proud city in the heart of Greece,) the apostle had occasion to touch on most of these points. He tells them that Christ sent him “to preach the Gospel, not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ

should be made of none effect." To have come to them with the flourish of oratory or the accuracies of philosophical language, (by which some of the heads of the faction opposed to the apostle in that church are thought to have been distinguished;) or to have come with independent reasonings after the manner of philosophy; would have lowered down the authority of the Gospel, and dimmed its evidence by casting some of the praise of its success on the manner. It would have been less adapted to the multitude, and indeed to the humble, whose faith was to rest, not on the wisdom of men, but on the word of God. This "preaching of the cross," in manner as well as in matter, was foolishness to the proud rabbins and philosophers; but it proved the power and wisdom of God in accomplishing that reformation and salvation which neither Judaism nor philosophy ever achieved. Standing on the pinnacle of success, with half the known world at his feet, the apostle sublimely challenged all Jewry and Greece to show what they had done. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." This was sufficiently humbling to the pride of Pharisees and the opinionated wisdom of Greece, and covered with disgrace those overweening systems which hid from the world the true knowledge of God.

Thus the outward administration of the Gospel rebuked the self-sufficiency of human reason and the arrogant calculations of human power, by showing the world that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men;" and by thundering in the ears of audacious pride, "If any man—seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise."

II. The same tendency appears in the texture of the Gospel. This is noticed in our text and the preceding verse. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

(1.) Our wisdom. Instead of ignorant and prejudiced reason, on which the wise men of the world proudly rested for the discovery of God, Christ, the great Prophet of the world, was appointed to lay open the secrets of the Eternal Mind and to bring "life and immortality to light;" and instead of arraying their wisdom against the revelation of God, believers love to put themselves to school to Christ as little children, and to "learn" of him who is "meek and lowly in heart." Seneca, one of the best of the philosophers, and the tutor and victim of Nero, lived in Rome while Paul was there; but they belonged to two different worlds.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he

hath declared him." "No man knoweth—who the Father is but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Christ is called "the Word," because it is by him that God expresses all his mind. It was he that built the universe, "and without him was not any thing made that was made." It was he that governed the world from the beginning, and the providence of God is the providence of the Mediatorial King. He gave the law at Sinai. He sent out his Spirit to indite the Old Testament and the New, and to illumine by his influence the minds of men. By his incarnation, life, ministry, and mediatorial work, he has thrown God upon every eye. He came out to be thus, "the image of the invisible God;" and the only God known to our world is the God that shines "in the face of Jesus Christ." He imparts all the practical wisdom which his people possess.

Thus the Gospel admits none of the powers of discovery so proudly claimed by ancient and modern magi, but brings the whole world, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his words.

(2.) Our righteousness. Under the first covenant justification was the judicial act of pronouncing one just; and the ground of it was a perfect personal holiness or righteousness. The terms justification and righteousness are transferred to things under the new covenant very unlike the other, but bearing some analogy to them. Justification now means the *treating* of a sinner as just, by his pardon and acceptance to

eternal life; and that which is the ground of this gracious justification is called his righteousness.

There is nothing to which men more strongly adhere than to the claims of their own merit. They even expect wages from God for services rendered, and say with Bellarmin, "Give unto us, O Lord, for we have given unto thee." This self-righteousness is at war with truth and justice, and must be put down before the sinner will consent to receive, or God can consistently bestow, salvation by grace. The whole texture of the Gospel is fitted to put down this arrogant pretender, to annihilate the last lurking pride of man, to cover sin with eternal disgrace, to vindicate the rights and claims of God, to sustain his empire over a subject universe, and to manifest all his glory in the highest conceivable degree.

To accomplish these ends, God took the ground that he would not pardon a single sinner till Christ had died in his stead; that he would not deal out to one of Adam's race, either a crown of glory or a cup of water, but as the reward of the perfect obedience of his Son; and that he would deliver neither the pardon nor the positive good but to the intercession of the Mediator. How these resolutions supported the law and condemned sin and abased pride, I am now to show.

[1.] The atonement. "Think not," said Christ, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one

tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." The prophet had said, "He will magnify the law and make it honourable."

Christ died in our stead to answer, so far as the law is concerned, the very end of our punishment. What is the end of punishment as the law is concerned? To go back a step further, why is a penalty annexed to a law? It is to make it law rather than advice. Without a penalty it would have no commanding authority. The empire of the law against murder rests on the assurance which all draw from the penalty, that if they murder they shall die. And why is the penalty executed? For the same reason for which it was annexed; for if not executed it is nothing. Why is that murderer executed? to give empire to the law by convincing all that if they murder they shall die. Supposing one has murdered and his brother offers to die in his stead, and does die by the direction of the king; are not the spectators as much convinced that if they murder they shall die, as though the criminal himself had suffered? To dispense pardon to all reformed murderers from generation to generation, and to offer it beforehand on that condition to all the murderers of a world, without exacting any equivalent for their punishment, would annihilate the law against murder. If we were to be pardoned, it was necessary that some other measure, as expressive as our punishment, should be taken to convince the universe that God was determined to support his law by executing its penalty on future transgressors.

The execution of his beloved Son expressly in our stead, by a stroke laid on by the Lawgiver, because by the Lawgiver he was commanded to receive it, made this impression as strongly as it could have been made by the eternal perdition of all Adam's race. And this solemn declaration, that sin should not go unpunished, loudly "condemned sin in the flesh."

[2.] The obedience of Christ. The original principle on which God set out in his government over this world, was not to issue a single positive good, after man was set out in existence, but as the reward of a perfect obedience; for all was forfeited by a single transgression. It would put more abundant honour on the law to preserve this principle under the dispensation of grace. Accordingly arrangements were made for Christ to be placed under law, and perfectly to obey it, and in reward of his obedience to receive all the positive blessings intended for the human race in both worlds, including all that was necessary for a state of probation. So the man who labours in your field, is content to receive his wages in garments for his children, which he could by no means wear himself. To all these blessings, as soon as he had fulfilled his obedience, he had a covenant right, and took them out of the hands of pure God-head, and held them by a mediatorial claim; and these, together with the Church itself, and I may add, the universe, constitute the inheritance of the "Heir of all things." Every morsel of food which we receive belongs to the mediatorial estate, and comes to us

because first given to him; and it ought to be the sweeter to us on that account. Not a shower descends upon the fields,—not a stalk of barley waves in the harvest, but sends forth a voice, “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways.” A title to heaven and all the privileges of sonship come in this way. The “First-born” inherits the whole estate by his own right, and we come in under him as “joint-heirs.” Because he lives we live also. He arose and ascended by his own right; but he came out of the grave as the head drawing the members after him, and has gone to prepare a place for us.

This is the great doctrine of justification by grace, which makes so conspicuous a figure in the New Testament, and is so abasing to the pride of man.

[3.] The intercession of Christ. As the high priest entered once a year into the holy place with “the blood of goats and calves,” and with the names of the twelve tribes upon his heart, to intercede for them before the Lord; so Christ, “by his own blood,” has entered “into heaven itself,” there “to appear in the presence of God for us.” There “he ever liveth to make intercession” for us: that is, his desires, and the silent influences of his atonement and obedience, (the latter involving his covenant claims,) continually rise up before the throne. This is only carrying out the same respect for the law so conspicuous in the two preceding measures.

But the soul-humbling and God-exalting process is not yet ended. Not only are the atonement, obedience, and intercession of Christ thus provided, in a way to support the rights and claims and government of God, to condemn sin, and cover pride with eternal confusion; but no man is allowed to share in this salvation until, from the bottom of his heart, he has approved of all these measures and all their expressions; until he has taken back all his proud speeches against God and bent his imperious head to his Maker's feet, and owned that he never had any cause to rise up so loftily against his Creator; until, with his face in the dust, he has justified God in condemning him to eternal infamy, and has heartily approved of the whole character and government of him whom he has always called a tyrant; until he feels that the air is too good for him to breathe, and the dust is too good for him to wrap himself in, and that he deserves nothing but everlasting shame and contempt; until he is willing to come down on his knees as a beggar and ask for a crumb to keep him from starving, and to be saved by free grace and for the righteousness of another; until he feels it sweet to be thus abased, and covets it more than he does the throne of an arch-angel; until he exalts God above every other object and gives him all the glory of his salvation.

Even pardon itself buries the sinner still lower in the dust. "That thou mayst remember and be confounded and never open thy mouth any more because

of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

This is none of that poverty of spirit which involves degradation. It is only viewing things according to truth. Holiness cannot fail to feel thus in a creature that has sinned. If holiness is dignity, this abasement of a soul that has been found in arms against infinite goodness and dying love, outtops the dignity of kings.

The pardon and acceptance connected with this temper, are that justification by faith which holds so high a place in the Christian system, and which confessedly strips all the glory from the sinner and gives it to God.

III. The same tendency of the Gospel appears in its application. Christ is made of God unto us *sanctification*, "that, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

As the race were condemned by the law to the curse of eternal abandonment, the Spirit could not come to men without the mediation of Christ. By his atonement he made it consistent with the honour of the law to set this curse aside, and as the reward of his obedience he obtained this positive good for men. He told his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." But when he ascended on high, among his other gifts he received this for men, "that the Lord God might dwell among them." And within ten days

he sent out "the Lord" the "Spirit" to abide in the Church forever. As he had given bonds for the payment of the price, he received this purchased good in Eden, and applied it to the sanctification of all the saints of the Old Testament. This is the origin of all the holiness that has ever been found in our world since the fall.

The heathen philosophers depended on the self-determining power of the will for all their personal virtue, and on their self-taught ethics for the reformation of the world. And even many who have been baptised have contended earnestly for this independence of the human will. In opposition to all these proud aspirations, the Gospel casts the world for sanctification on the Spirit of God and the purchase of Christ.

Nor is this all. In their spiritual death it finds nothing in them to aid their resurrection,—nothing but what is opposed to life,—and ascribes to God, not only the whole power, but a conquering power,—“the working of—*mighty* power,” as great as that “which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” This casts them dead and helpless into the hands of a sovereign God, and leaves with him, in the most absolute sense, the decision of their fate. “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy,” and whom he will he resigns to judicial hardness. He bestows salvation on whom he pleases, and withholds it from whom he pleases,—holding this reason over a

subject and trembling world, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" No antecedent circumstance of disposition or purpose or virtue or wisdom or learning or station or birth or any other known thing in sinners themselves has the least influence. It is all of grace,—free, sovereign grace. For the discrimination he has a reason; but to hold them down to their place and to assert his absolute supremacy over them, he will not tell them what it is. "He giveth not account of any of his matters." Intrenched in infinite wisdom and rectitude, of which heaven and earth are filled with proofs, he will have them know that he will do what he will with his own without explaining himself to them; and their business is to submit in silent adoration. Thus he takes the highest possible stand of authority, and puts them down as low as sinners can lie under a sceptre of mercy; and makes them love to lie there and see him enthroned, and love to find their heaven in the dust.

Is it not for the order and happiness of a family that the rights of a wise and benevolent father should be admitted, and if government is any thing to the family, that they should be maintained? As God created all things for the gratification of his benevolence, the whole is his absolute property, and he has the most perfect right, while he respects the rights of creatures, to do what he will with his own universe. He is entitled to love, gratitude, and praise, and has a right to require these of his creatures, and to bind together and tranquil-

lize the universe by the exercise of his authority. And it is infinitely important to the harmony and happiness of the whole, and particularly to the union of creatures with him, that his rights should be fully admitted and maintained. And if ignorance and prejudice are not to be taken in as counsellors, the government of infinite wisdom and love ought to be absolute. And it serves all these purposes to inure creatures to submit to his providence without a question, and to his law with no other question than to ascertain his will. Upon this principle it was that in the commencement of his government over this world, he selected a tree and forbade all approach to that, with no other reason assigned than that it was his sovereign will: and if it was a small matter to legislate about, so much the better for that: the less the apparent reason for the prohibition, the more obvious the claim to unquestioning obedience.

Thus every part of the Gospel is calculated to abase the pride of man, to break and subdue and humble the sinner, to support the rights, the claims, the government of God, and to give all the glory to him. Whatever light or holiness or title to salvation we possess, comes from God through the Redeemer. We are ignorant and foolish, he is our wisdom; we are guilty, he is our righteousness; we are depraved, he is our sanctification; we are in bonds, he is our redemption. In every part the character of God appears most glorious, and that of man most deformed. And all this exhibition is made that God may be seen as he is,—that men

may know him and know their obligations to him, and grow up into eternal union with him,—and that all holy creatures may see his glory and take their proper place at his feet, and go in to constitute a united, happy, and glorious universe.

Whatever brings out God to view exalts him, abases sinners, and humbles and blesses the creation. Let us then see what and how much of God is revealed in the plan of salvation.

In the first place, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are brought out to view in their own proper and infinitely important characters; a distinction never whispered to the universe in any of his other works. In the next place, his inflexible resolution, at all hazards, to support his moral empire over the creation, comes out; disclosing his infinite attachment to all the principles of his law and to the happiness which it subserves, and thus manifesting his holiness, justice, and benevolence. In the next place, his amazing compassion and mercy and patience and condescension and accessibility and truth are brought to light: his power too, in subduing the carnal heart, in restraining, bounding, and defeating all the machinations of Satan, in conquering all his enemies and carrying their counsels headlong, in forcing them unwittingly to prop his throne and execute his decrees and help fill the universe with his glory.

But the wisdom elicited is that on which I wish chiefly to dwell. This wonderful plan of the incarna-

tion was the forming of a connecting link between finite and infinite natures, and filling up the whole chasm between God and us. It was bringing down the infinite God within the reach of creatures,—was bringing out the invisible God to the view of creatures,—was concentrating, as it were, the omnipresent God to a point and throwing all his glories from the face of Jesus Christ. It was laying out the divine perfections upon a human scale, and expressing them through human organs and amidst human relations,—the most intelligible way of exhibiting God to men. And the angels themselves, we are taught to believe, more familiarly apprehend God, and more easily hold intercourse with him, for this medium of vision and communion.

By the union of two infinitely dissimilar natures in one Person, the wisdom of God contrived to make an infinite Person mortal; and by that means found out a way to punish sin and let the sinner go unpunished; to support his law without executing its penalty on the transgressor, and even to give it more authority than though it had been literally executed.

He confounded the wisdom of men by the triumphs of that very weakness which provoked their contempt, and by making, in various ways, the most unpromising means lead to the most splendid success.

He so shaped the Gospel, that, in every part, it should be at war with pride, and touch it in every tender spot, and call into the field every arm of that foe, and exhibit it before heaven and earth in the hideous

attitude of warring against all the love and authority of the Gospel. A system so calculated to cause that atrocious enemy to writhe under unwelcome authority, under unbearable humiliations, under overwhelming disgrace,—to rage and blaspheme and assault the heavens,—was fitted to make a thorough experiment upon the human character and upon the nature of sin, and to bring out both in a way to set off, before a wondering universe, the double glory of justice and mercy.

He pressed into the service of his cause, all the agents in the wicked world ;—the policy of kings, the pride of philosophers, the craft of priests, and the very ferocity of bloody persecution. “The wrath of man shall praise” him, either by stringing a harp in heaven or by lighting the fires of his justice in hell. The sins of the elect shall praise him. The more one of that number has dishonoured God, the more God will be honoured in his salvation.

He defeated all the stratagems of Satan and effectually bruised the serpent’s head. The greatest dishonour cast upon God, was made to redound to his greatest glory : the greatest contempt cast upon his law, was made the occasion of the greatest honour done to the law. Satan meant to rob God of the glory of creating the human race ; but by the instrumentality of that very foe, God obtained more glory by the human race than angels, men, or devils ever thought of. Satan aimed to ruin a world which God, in all its virgin loveliness, had reared ; but God will raise up, from the

ashes of the old, the new heavens and new earth, in more than their original glory. Satan envied a race made to fill the place of his legions in heaven ; but that very nature which he sought to destroy, is advanced to the throne of the universe. He thought to make men his slaves ; they will be his judges and sentence him to endless torment. Elect man is a gainer by his own ruin. His sin is made the occasion of higher advances in holiness ; for to whom much is forgiven the same loveth much. His misery is made the occasion of his greater blessedness ; for a taste of wretchedness gives a higher relish for happiness, and the great object of enjoyment is more fully revealed, and he will be forever transported with gratitude to his Redeemer. He has become more sensibly dependant on God for holiness and happiness, because he receives both as the purchase of Christ, and because he has been raised from the depths of sin and misery. By means of his union with the incarnate Son, he is brought into a closer union with God : "That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.—I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." When Satan had nailed the Saviour to the cross, he thought he had triumphed ; but he only pulled the building down upon his own head. The weapons with which Christ went forth were like the sling and the stone, they were poverty, reproaches, sufferings, and death. He prevailed by becoming weak, and conquered by dying. As the

head of Goliath was severed by his own sword, so Christ prevailed against his giant enemy by the cross; "and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them *in it*." In a word, God has made the seduction, sin, and ruin of man the occasion of all the good resulting from the work of redemption.

And finally, the wisdom of God appears in that capital measure to vindicate his own impartiality, the appointment of the Friend and Brother of man to be his Judge. "The Father—hath given him authority to execute judgment also *because he is the Son of man*."

In view only of a small part of this wonderful plan, the apostle exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." The very angels "desire to look into" these "things." Indeed we are expressly told that God "created *all* things by Jesus Christ, *to the intent* that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known *by the Church* the manifold wisdom of God." This then was the design of creation,—that the divine wisdom, (which is intellect and knowledge directed to practical ends by moral attributes,) might be manifested to the angels, and by a parity of reason to the whole creation, by the work of redemption. This shows that the wisdom here unfolded is greater than the angels possess, and greater than they see displayed in

any other world. They are put to school on this planet, in distinction from all other worlds which they visit, to learn "the manifold wisdom of God."

In short, all the perfections of God, (unless we are to except the exhibitions of his justice in hell,) are more displayed in this work than in any other work or in any other world, and perhaps more than in all other ways, and so far as we can see, more than could have been exhibited by any other means. The whole will form a constellation of glory the most dazzling that ever met a created eye,—a glory that will constitute by far the greater part of the happiness of the creation.

Why should you think that this grandest of all the exhibitions of God will be shut up in the nut-shell of a single world? Why should you thus degrade Christ and his work? Have we no revelation on this subject? We are distinctly enough told that all the worlds of which we have any knowledge were created in one week, and will be destroyed and renovated together. And why should not their inhabitants have at least some knowledge of the general judgment? We are told that all worlds without exception were made by the "First-born" and "Heir of all things," and that "without him was not any thing made that was made;"—that "all things were created by him and *for* him;"—and that in reward of his work on earth "all things are put under him," with the single exception of him that "put all things under him." And is it to

be believed that the worlds which the Redeemer made for his own purpose, and received as a part of his empire for his work on earth, will be kept in eternal ignorance of him and his work? that a family of worlds which were born and died together, will be eternally so severed by the common Parent, that no report of the miracle of the universe, wrought in this world, will ever reach the rest? that so little economy will be used in instructing the creation, as that a school, opened here at infinite expense, and capable of sending the highest lessons gratuitously to all worlds, and at which the whole universe might graduate, will be put under a bushel? If God "created *all* things by Jesus Christ, *to the intent*" that all heaven should take lessons of wisdom from this university, is it credible that other worlds, created expressly to subserve this institution, and known to be connected with its Head, should be excluded from the tuition? As this earth, (to use another figure) was erected only for a stage on which the Messiah might declare and act out the perfections of the Godhead, subservient worlds seem intended as seats in the great amphitheatre from which the amazed spectators may view the scene. Yes, they shall hear of Calvary. The wonderful report will travel from world to world until it reaches the utmost bounds of the creation, and will hold in perpetual astonishment and transport the whole family of God. That Gospel which creatures of the dust despise,—which infidel insects trample under foot,

—is the grandest means that God has employed, not merely to raise one world from pollution and shame and eternal despair, but to elevate and aggrandize and glorify the universe, and fill it with the highest blessedness that comes from God. And when creatures shall see the universe thus supremely blest, will they not look back to Eden and adore the wisdom that did not restrain the first transgression?

As the amazing story wanders to other planets and systems, this earth will become the centre of the creation. All worlds will gather around this sphere and send their exploring eyes to Calvary, to drink in the lessons of love, wisdom, and power which emanate from that school of the universe. And while all eyes are turned that way, I plant myself on the sacred mount, and in the centre of a boundless amphitheatre, enjoy the transports of worlds,—of all worlds but one. And as I see the whole holy creation wrapt in high and ecstatic contemplations, and filling their respective spheres with the songs of Bethlehem, I feel an irrepressible desire to call out infidels before the creation of God, and demand, What now think you of Christ? But not an infidel is to be found. The few that broke their way to hell through light that Bartimeus might have seen, are infidels no more. To that world I would send my voice, and say, Ye Porphyries, and Julians, and Voltaires, what now think you of the work of redemption? Ye abandoned men and women, who would have annihilated the Bible and the mar-

riage covenant, and turned the universe into a brothel, what think you of the Christian religion now?

There is another spot in the universe to which I wish to come. It is to the feet of the enthroned Lamb. O how will the redeemed companies collect together on the banks of heaven and recount the wondrous story, with all the history of their deliverances. And then, as they look up and see the nail-prints, with what ineffable gratitude will they cast their crowns at his feet and say, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." The elect angels, who are brought into a special relation to Christ as their Head, will rapturously join the song. Other holy creatures will perhaps be gathered home from new or renovated worlds in different periods of eternity, and their voices will join the concert. John had a vision of this heavenly oratorio. The redeemed began the song; the angels next struck in; and before they had done, the whole creation were employed in bursting praise. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy;—for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,—and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.—And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne,—saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing. And every creature

which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." O may I be there. Scatter those little things that kings call crowns, among those that will pick them up; but O may I be there and join in the song that celebrates my Redeemer's praise. Be that my heaven,—my eternal recreation and delight. Amen.

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